

**EBONY AND THE IVORY TOWER:
THE VOICES OF 4 AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND THE FACTORS
THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR CAREER TRANSITION FROM K-12
ADMINISTRATION INTO THE HIGHER EDUCATION
PROFESSORiate**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

A qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of four African American female professors at four-year universities is presented in this study. The purpose of the study was to explore and interpret the career transitions of each participant. This study also includes attributes, benefits, and barriers that are experienced by these women once they have successfully transitioned into the professoriate. The study was conducted through the theoretical frameworks of Social Career Theory and Black Feminist Theory. Since most research on educational career transitioning and the successful navigation of the professoriate focuses on the point of view of the white male, this research adds a view of this topic from the point of view of successful African American women professors. As an integral part of American educational history, it is imperative to share the lived experiences of these women, if only to explore their influence on scholarly research at colleges and universities globally. Qualitative methodology was used as the findings indicate that positive personal and professional relationships are imperative to the success of these women. Although each woman has faced barriers and made sacrifices, this study focuses on their resilience and ultimate successful transition into higher education.

DEDICATION

This dissertation I dedicate to those in my family who have come before me. Those whose faces are unknown because I have never met them, but their legacy lives on in the family names of Doucet, Scott, Price, Parker, Gallow, Fontenot, Lewis, Much, and Mitchell. The bible says to train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. I know that I was trained by a zealous group of men and women who held so many hopes and dreams for my future as I was the first child of my generation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the earliest years of our nation's history, African Americans were prohibited from learning to read and write. The United States' tumultuous past of enslavement and oppression of Black people, compounded by the reality and prevalence of racism and White supremacy, has shaped a nation with its fair share of social and political uprisings over the past 50 years. Indeed, the history of African American education is characterized by their denial of education and also by segregated education. Nevertheless, there have been crucial turning points for educational access and success of African Americans. Landmark decisions such as *Brown V. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954), for example, energized the movement for equal opportunity.

Citizens of the United States have witnessed multiple efforts to improve the quality of life of African Americans such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Unfortunately, even in contemporary society, African Americans are still burdened by historical legacies of discrimination and systematic oppression. Evidence of this can be seen throughout the entire educational spectrum from K-12 to higher education. Harvey (2011) argues, higher education institutions have been complicit in segregation and other systems of exclusion and because of the ivory tower posture, have not taken responsibility nor have they engaged in social problems, especially not racial segregation, but rather have reinforced institutionalized racism. Wilder (2013) describes the American (literal) ivory tower as institutions that were not "innocent or passive

beneficiaries of conquest and colonial slavery” (p. 11) and even today, representation of African Americans in the field of higher education, while increasing, remains consistently low (Allen, Epps, Huillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000; Evans, 2007a, 2007b).

Over the past few decades, there has been considerable growth in scholarship related to the standing of African Americans in higher education (Holmes, 2004; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008) Much of this literature has centered on their experiences at predominantly White institutions [PWIs] (Edwards, Clark, & Bryant, 2012; Harley, 2008; Park & Denson, 2009; Smith, Turner, Osei-Kofi, & Richards, 2004; Stanley, 2006). Further, the research has been directed toward the retention of students or faculty (Holmes, 2004; Jackson, 2002), faculty diversity in general (Brown-Glaude, 2008; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015) and more recently specifically on the experiences of Black faculty negotiating identity and achieving success in the academy (Bonner, Marbley, Tuitt, Robinson, Banda, & Hughes, 2015; Carter, 2015). Despite this growth, there is a paucity of literature that focuses specifically on the experiences of African Americans, and African American women in particular, who successfully transition from other careers into the professoriate.

Although researchers are increasingly conducting studies that focus on African Americans in the professoriate, and on African American women in the professoriate more specifically, the discourse on African American women transitioning into the academy is too often left out of the discussion. A priority for the national discourse on education must include the voices of African American women who have successfully

transitioned into the professoriate, especially those coming from other educational careers in K-12 settings.

It is imperative to examine these experiences and insights as it is often argued that African American professional women are presented with a special case of obstacles because they customarily hold two ascribed statuses that place them at the margins of society: one is related to gender and the other is related to their ethnicity. Further, the environment of the ivory tower, in this case predominantly White institutions, continue to perpetuate and reinforce the marginalization of its women of color, students and faculty alike (Souto & Ray, 2007; Hill-Collins, 1986; Waring, 2003; Mosley, 1980). Collins (1986) notes that Black women in academia occupy an outsider-within status –a position which they hold on the margins of White society, specifically in higher education.

The representation of African American females in higher education administration is lower than that of their racial and gender counterparts. They are generally promoted at a slower rate, receive the lowest salaries, and tend to teach only part-time. They are mostly found among the lowest ranks of the professoriate, primarily in non-tenured positions within the traditional disciplines of education and other social sciences (Gregory, 2001; Howard-Vital, 1989). As reported by the National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES] (2015), of the 791,391 faculty members at 4-year universities in the United States of America in 2013, less than one percent of this total was made of African American professors. Of the total, 354,935 (44.8%) were women and of those a mere 2,647 (.75%) were African American women professors. The few

African American women that make it to a career in higher education are in a constant battle to move toward a full professorship and/or administration. Of over 180 thousand total professoriate positions granted across the country, only 6,665 of those are held by Blacks and only 1.5% were filled by Black women (NCES, 2015).

Black women's experiences in higher education have improved but, only very few of these women have been able to balance careers and families. Many women have had to leave academia or settle for positions on the periphery (Gregory, 2001; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Souto & Ray, 2007). Because of these and other difficulties that African American women face in securing these prized professorial positions, there is a dire need for research to provide insight into African American women's personal and professional experiences for those who have successfully navigated their careers from K12 settings into an academic (professorial) position in a four-year higher education institution (the ivory tower).

'The ivory tower' describes the impenetrable halls of colleges and universities, especially ivy-league schools. To many, these campuses are seen as unapproachable, unreachable, and unwilling to allow certain groups namely women and people of color to enter these halls of White homogeneity. Some may see the ivory tower as a group of scholarly academics that are housed in this imaginary 'tower' of knowledge and those who inhabit it are unwilling to share its knowledge. Buckley (2012) states, "if academics view 'knowledge as power' (a traditional view by universities being the monopolies of knowledge and sitting in an 'ivory tower') and not 'knowledge sharing is power' (a

prerequisite in the twenty-first century's knowledge society), then such attitude is a very important barrier to knowledge sharing” (p. 334).

As the number of African American women entering the professoriate increases, there is a need to look closely at the variety of pathways to the professoriate for these women specifically. This study was conducted to provide a unique view of the journey into the professoriate from African American women who have successfully made this transition after a career in the K-12 educational setting.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks that guided this research were Collins' (2009) Black Feminist Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002; Lent, 2005). These bodies of literature offer a way to situate the study in that they provided the system of concepts, assumptions, and theories that informed the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using these sets of theories, we can further explore, interpret, and develop a deeper understanding of the personal and professional experiences of these African American women who have successfully transitioned from K-12 educational contexts to the professoriate.

Black Feminist Theory is used to focus on the identity components and on the personal and professional experiences of the African American women who participated in the study and Social Cognitive Career Theory, which is anchored in Bandura's Self Efficacy Theory (1977, 1997), focuses on the mutually influencing relationship between the participants and their environment. As Alfred (2001) pointed out, there are many models that seek to explain career development; however, these models have been the

focus of critique in relation to their appropriateness for women and others from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. As such, it was most appropriate to use both Black Feminist Theory in conjunction with Social Cognitive Career Theory as lenses to be able to develop a holistic understanding of the personal and professional experiences of African American women who made the transition from K-12 educational contexts to the professoriate.

Black Feminist Theory

Black Feminist thought is rooted in the basic impetus of empowering African American women to embark on a path toward personal freedom. Collins (1991) explained that it evolved from Critical Social Theory, which encompasses “bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with central questions facing U.S. Black women as a collective” (p. 9). African American women (AAW) who are K-12 administrators often experience oppression in the face of promotion as assistant principals, principals, district-level department leaders, and superintendents (Tillman & Cochran 2000).

Overall, AAW are often overlooked as viable candidates in the place of people who may have entered the career journey with them or even people they have trained. As AAW enter the professoriate, marginalization is a territorial rite of passage (Jones 2014). The oppression of AAW creates an environment of White majority rules dominating the culture and in particular, making important decisions.

Therefore, traditional social injustices will prevail in the very place that stands to thwart the ideals of equality and justice (Hill-Collins, 2009, 1986; hooks, 1986, 1990;

Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Bell & Nkomo, 1999). The definitive context of Black Feminist Thought will provide a background for interpreting and understanding an African American woman's oppressive struggles framed within racism, classism, and sexism over the years. As part of the theoretical framework for this study, Black Feminist Theory can help offer critique to some of the oppressive structures this study's participants reported that were present in their families, communities, workplaces, and in society in general.

The ideas and intellect of Black women have been hidden and kept quiet for far too long, and Black feminist thought is committed to reclaiming the lost works and contributions of these Black women to "reconceptualize the dialectic of oppression and activism" (Hill-Collins, 2009, p. 16). Intersectionality argues that sexism, class oppression, and racism are bound together (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Hill-Collins (2009) expounds upon the term intersectionality as she uses its marginal boundaries to dissect the black feminist movement and make a theoretically grounded discourse in social academia known as Black Feminist Thought. In the 1970s, The National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) and The Combahee River Collective (CRC) focused on the interconnectedness of the many prejudices that were faced by African American Women such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and lesbophobia. The CRC was a separatist group that grew from African American women's rejection of the oppression faced during the Civil Rights Movement. These women claimed that Black men held their own interests at the center of the Civil Rights fight and middle class White women held their own struggles at the center of the national feminist movement. These national

‘freedom fighters’ did not include the plight of the Black woman. As AAW, they had to prove to other Black women that they too were worthy to fight with traditional feminists women’s rights. They also had to prove to White women that their fight within the traditional movement was different because Black women experienced a different and more intense form of oppression than White women. Another struggle within the Black feminist movement was within the Black Nationalist movement. Black male leaders had to acknowledge the presence, stories, and strength of Black women in the struggle toward equality and freedom in the United States. The CRC leaders argued that the liberation of Black women would symbolize freedom for all oppressed people since that would require an end to racism, sexism, and class oppression. They called this idea of living with multiple oppressions, simultaneity (hooks, 1990, 1992; Combahee, 1979).

Through the years, AAW have been faced with multiple stereotypes such as Jezebel, hoochie, and mammy and these have attributed to the sustainability of oppression of Black women (Hill-Collins, 2009). As such, Hill-Collins (1986) posits that Black women must make self-definition and self-valuation a priority in their fight for societal inclusion and freedom. AAW must reject the dominant culture’s definition of them and insist upon providing their own varied definitions of self. At the core of Black Feminist Thought is the fact that Black women must clarify the definition of the Black woman for society by interpreting their own experiences and ideas. AAW must do this collaboratively within and outside of the academy (Hill-Collins, 2009).

Because Black women have unique histories at the intersections of systems of power, they have created world-views out of a need for self-definition and to work on

behalf of social justice. Hill-Collins (1986) implies that intersectionality includes women who provide discourse about the experiences and ideas of ordinary Black women that provide a unique perspective on self, community, and society. It is within this frame of reference that the Black feminist movement spurred a creative boom in the community of AAW. The theory supports adamantly rejecting proposed dehumanization as a socially constructed definition given to them by the dominant culture (Hill-Collins, 2009). Black Feminist Thought draws a definite line in the sand between being an intellectual and an academician or an activist and a scholar. The difference lies in the complex distinction between the use of a researcher's participants' as objects or as subjects. Black feminist thought proposes the use of AAW and their lived experiences as subjects within research to hold the integrity of their own interpretation of their realities (Hill-Collins, 2009).

Social Cognitive Career Theory

In outlining the five main career development theories that have guided career guidance and counseling over the past few decades in both the United States and internationally, Leung (2008) described Social Cognitive Career Theory as a theory which offers three segmental, yet interlocking process models of career development seeking to explain (a) the development of academic and vocational interest, (b) how individuals make educational and career choices, and (c) educational and career performance and stability. The three segmental models have different emphasis centering

around three core variables, which are self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals (p. 125).

With a history of behaviorist and cognitivist elements, this comprehensive framework helps us to understand and explain (1) how basic academic and career interests develop, (2) how educational and career choices are made, and (3) how academic and career success is obtained. This means therefore that SCCT in conjunction with Black Feminist Thought, were useful as lenses to understand the career and academic choices, the motivations behind the educational and career performance, and developmental processes related to the personal and professional experiences of African American women who transition from K-12 educational contexts to the professoriate. These lenses takes into consideration the ways in which African American women are positioned in context of K-12 educational contexts and the professoriate.

Personal Story

As a young girl growing up in the rural town of Eunice, Louisiana, I always dreamed of making a name for myself. After being told by so many people that I was so smart that I should be a lawyer or a doctor, I always thought that my dream would come into fruition as a talented medical doctor who found a cure for AIDS or cancer. I use to pretend to write my signature as Dr. Sunday Price and it always made me feel proud. I took all of the necessary honors classes in high school so that I could get into a “good” number one for placing African-Americans into medical school.

I graduated with a degree in biology pre-med, completed the MCAT, and then I was faced with the daunting task of applying to medical school. When I searched my

bank of mentors, there was no one that looked like me or had similar educational experiences to mine that could offer me any guidance in this area. I was struggling to find even one African American woman that was in my range of contact that I could go to with questions. As cliché as it may sound, the idea of me becoming a medical Dr. became a dream deferred.

Although I let go of that dream, I knew that continuing my education was the key to success in whatever endeavor I would embark upon next. There was not one, but there were many steady mentors who kept me motivated and moving forward toward what they would deem to be an appropriate career field. There were my church mentors; my third grade teacher who taught me manners; my tenth grade teacher who taught me how to write; my spiritual counselor who taught me how to pray, and my pastor's wife who gave me the foundation for success in college.

Then there were my grade school mentors: my eighth grade social studies teacher who taught me how to be confident when speaking in public, my eighth grade reading teacher who taught me how to be a lady, my seventh grade science teacher who planted the seed of love for science, and my first grade teacher who instilled in me that I was the best at everything and anything. Of course there were my mentors at home who taught me all of the life lessons that I would need to make it in the world: my grandmother who was a nutrition worker in my pre-K school, my aunt who became the manager of a similar program in my middle school, another aunt who was a special education aid in my high school, my cousin who was a social studies teacher, my father who was a middle school teacher and coach, and my mother who was a teenage mother that worked

her way through college by being a secretary at the middle school to being a certified classroom teacher and now an instructional interventionist.

Perseverance, dedication, hard work, commitment, and working with people, it was all around me and I was searching elsewhere for a fulfilling career field. I needed to look no further than what was in my blood, working as a teacher of leaders. It is my fate and it comes quite naturally to help children to learn by helping adults to build their teaching and leadership skills. I found my next step, in order to grow other educational leaders; I needed to be an administrator so that I could make a noticeable difference in policies and procedures that would impact the masses. As I began to pay attention to all of the people that have influenced my life, and although they had given me most of the skills I would need to be successful, none of them could give me what I really needed.

Even with my credentials, I needed a sponsor who had the means to offer me employment opportunities and career advancement. With that realization glaring at me, I decided to go into an independent school district and use my skills to teach others. Over the course of seventeen years, I have been a biology teacher, Pre-AP biology teacher, IPC teacher, ESL biology teacher, basketball coach, softball coach, academic coach, national science honor society sponsor, science instructional specialist, assistant principal, dean of instruction, and the associate principal of two high schools and one middle school.

I got married, bought a house, had two children, obtained a master's degree, and began work on my doctoral degree. All of these things seemed to have happened simultaneously and with no example of what steps to take next. Is that it? Have I maxed

out as the associate principal of a secondary public school? I want to take my career to the next level, but what is that exactly? I know what I want to do, but I am not sure how to get there. For me, this educational journey has been a sea of uncharted waters as I attempt to make the transition from a K-12 administrator to a young woman who is ready to make a mark on the world as a scholar and professor in a university setting. I know that my calling is to impact education globally and to be a trailblazer for other African American women like me.

There is a plethora of research about women in educational administration in both the K-12 and the higher education realm. This study adds to the literature by filling the gap, which stands as African American women attempt to transition from a career in K-12 educational contexts into a career in higher education as a professor.

Statement of the Problem

Modeled after the English educational system, the American higher education system was designed and intended for educating privileged, White males (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Thelin, 2004). Not until in relatively recent history did African American women become fully accepted participants in K-12 and higher education. Nonetheless, African American women have been involved to some degree in higher education administration for more than a century; however, the research literature is almost void of their experiences, socializations, success, and paths as they transition from a career in K12 education to a career (administrative or scholarly) in higher education (Souto & Ray, 2007; Hill-Collins, 1986; Waring, 2003; Mosley, 1980). It is, therefore, imperative to expose the obstacles and triumphs experienced by a select group of these women from

their own perspectives. This study provides a snapshot of the personal and professional experiences of African American women who have transitioned from the K-12 community to a university community.

The environment of the ivory tower, in this case the higher education research institution, continues to perpetuate and reinforce the marginalization of its women faculty of color (Souto & Ray, 2007; Hill-Collins, 1986; Waring, 2003; Mosley, 1980). NCES reported in 2015, there were 55,694 women designated as full professors in the U.S., and only 4.8% (2,647) of them were African American women. In the same year, there were 6,665 Black full professors in U.S. degree granting institutions. Only a little more than one third of them were African American women. Over the last few years the number of full professorships awarded to African American women has increased only minutely across this nation. Millennial research needs to provide valuable information to this growing number of African American women as they transition from various career paths into the professoriate. This study will provide a reference into this need for research specifically from the point of AAW who have successfully transitioned from a career in the K-12 setting into the professoriate.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret the professional and personal experiences of African American women who transitioned from K-12 educational settings into the professoriate. The basis for this research hopes to advance beyond the struggles of gender biases or racial biases independently and addresses the specific complex issues experienced by African American women in the area of career

development toward the higher education professoriate. This research was conducted to add to the literature in this field by specifically taking a deeper look at African American women who have successfully transitioned from a career in K-12 educational settings into the professoriate at a four-year collegiate institution.

By learning more about these experiences, this research adds critical perspectives to the discussion of African American women in the academy by changing the grand narrative from a deficit-based approach to one focused on their success. Further, this invaluable knowledge may be beneficial to others seeking to enter the hallowed walls of academia.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for various reasons mainly because of its theoretical and practical implications. The findings show how the lived personal and professional experiences of African American women who worked as administrators in K-12 education contexts have impacted their transition to four-year higher education institutions. This research fills a void in the literature as these highlighted experiences describe the career decisions and paths of African American women as they transition from being administrators in K- 12 to higher education contexts.

As this study focuses on the career trajectories and development of African American women in the professoriate, it is important to note that career development theories must also incorporate considerations for race, identity, and culture. The early experiences of race and culture are an integral part of career development of African American women (Alfred, 2001). This study has implications for policy makers because

the study is related to African American women in the academy describing key experiences that impact their lives as they transitioned from administrative roles in K-12 education settings to the professoriate while reflecting on their trajectory and career development, framed by a critical discussion through the lens of Black Feminist Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory. Policy makers who are interested in diversifying faculty in universities can glean useful information to assist in these initiatives. Further, the study is significant as it provides a new way to think about mentoring African American women in preparation for academic careers in hopes for effective recruitment, retention, and success in higher education.

Research Questions

This study examines and interprets the lived personal and professional experiences of four African American women who are former K12 administrators who successfully transitioned to the professorate in higher education institutions. The following questions served as guides for the study:

1. How do African American women describe their leadership characteristics as urban K-12 administrators as they transitioned into careers in the professoriate?
2. How do African American women describe their experiences related to their transition from administrative careers in K-12 settings into the professoriate?
3. How do African American women describe their experiences as it relates to their new roles in the professoriate?

Definition of Terms

1. African American- United States citizens who are non-Hispanic and classified as “Black” by the Bureau of the Census. Descending from any of the Black racial groups of Africa. (Nettles & Perna, 1997)
2. Career Pathway- a workforce development strategy intended to develop employability skills and place individuals in high-demand, high-opportunity jobs.
3. Higher Education Institution- an educational institution that is accredited by a state approved source and is legally authorized to provide a program of education to students who have completed an accredited secondary education program.
4. Life Experiences- the active participation in events and activities and one’s personal perception of those events and activities

Delimitations of the Study

This study does not attempt to provide an exhaustive exploration of the experiences of African American women who have transitioned from administrative positions in K-12 settings to the professoriate. The findings therefore, are limited to the data that was gathered from one particular area of the country. Further, based on the boundaries and criteria set for the study, it does not seek to generalize its findings to any particular population, or that of the location from where the participants were interviewed. By using Black Feminist Theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory as the main bodies of literature that guided the study, it sought to uncover deep meanings in the participants’ lives as they described their personal and professional experiences as they related to their transition.

Summary and Organization of the Report

This chapter provided the introduction and background of the study that examined the personal and professional experiences of four African American women who worked as in K-12 education contexts and who transitioned to the professoriate. In addition to the background of the study, chapter I presented the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and significance of the study.

The second chapter of the report is based on a review of scholarship that is relevant to the study. This includes details related to the structure of k-12 and higher education; career transitions for African American women; mentorship in these contexts; and other challenges and issues particularly relevant to African American women. Chapter III follows with a description of the methodological procedures and perspectives. This chapter also details the strategies used in the management and analysis of the data.

Chapter IV first describes the participant backgrounds with a demographic profile and overview of their educational history and other relevant experiences. This chapter is mainly focused on the main findings and analysis from the study. The findings are organized by themes, which emerged from the rich data provided through interviews with the participants. The major themes for research question 1 included: (a) visionary (b) hardworking (c) impactful (d) confident and (e) resilient. Themes and Sub-themes from question 2 included: (a) personal experiences and (b) professional experiences. In terms of personal experiences two sub-themes emerged. They were (a) supportive personal

relationships and (b) making sacrifices. The theme of professional experiences also had two sub-themes (a) landing the job (b) mentors and (c) dealing with doubters.

Themes from question 3 included: (a) new roles; new responsibilities (b) The ‘isms’ rear their ugly heads (c) I’m a Superwoman and (d) Feeling the weight of the world on our shoulders.

The final chapter, Chapter V, presents a summary of the findings especially as they relate to the major research questions. Followed by a discussion of the study’s implications for policy, practice and theory, the chapter concludes with a summary and there is a culminating section that includes recommendations for future research and closing thoughts.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore and interpret the professional and personal experiences of African American women who transitioned from K-12 educational settings into higher education, more specifically the study focuses on issues related to their transitions into the professoriate. As such, this chapter consists of an overview of the literature related to the career paths of African American women who transition from K-12 education settings to the higher education professoriate.

The chapter is organized accordingly: first, it begins with a review of the overall structure of the American education system, first with an overview of early childhood education and K-12 followed by an overview of higher education. Higher education is discussed in terms of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (hereafter referred to as HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (hereafter referred to as PWIs). Next, the chapter presents a brief history of African American women in the academy followed by particular attention to women in the professoriate in contemporary contexts. This section is presented in terms of the resistance African American women have demonstrated in the context of education and in higher education in particular.

The chapter next describes the issue of faculty diversity in higher education with emphasis on African American women in the academy. Next, the chapter presents an overview of leadership with special focus on transformational theory and the concept of connected leadership. After describing African American women's success and

leadership in the professoriate, the chapter describes advantages and disadvantages faced by African American women with recommendations to enhance their success. The chapter concludes with a summary of the major elements reviewed in the literature.

Overview of Structure of the American Education System

This overview describes the structure and organization of the education system in the United States. It outlines the history of education in America as well as provides a snapshot of features of the administration and governance of the system.

Due to the Tenth Amendment (1791) of the U.S. Constitution (1787), the American education system operates and effectively functions through a highly decentralized system of education. Each state retains the overall authority and accountability for education at the elementary and secondary levels and these public schools are tax-supported and free to students and their families.

Early Childhood Education

Also called pre-primary education, early childhood education in the United States comes in various forms. These include: preschool, nursery school, day care centers, prekindergarten, and kindergarten. Although administered and governed by individual states the federal government also plays an important role in early childhood education.

Federal programs such as Head Start and Early Reading First serve low-income families by providing federal funding for instruction to ensure that children (particularly 3-and 4-year olds) start kindergarten with the necessary language and literacy skills needed for academic success. The Head Start and Early Head Start programs are

administered by the United States Department of Health and Human Services within the Administration for Children and Families. Head Start was established in 1965 and its purpose is refined as an organization that promotes school readiness for children in low-income families by offering educational, nutritional, health, social, and other services. Since its inception, Head Start has served more than 33 million children, birth to age 5, and their families. In 2015, Head Start was funded to serve nearly one million children and pregnant women in centers, family homes, and in family child care homes in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the nation (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). The Office of Head Start was appropriated \$8,598,095,000 for FY 2015 and since its inception, the organization has served more than 33 million children and their families.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2003a), some 64 percent of 3-to-5- year olds are enrolled in early childhood education programs and about 53 percent of these children participate in full-day programs.

Elementary and Secondary Education

Primary education, also known as elementary education, like secondary education, varies among states and among school districts in each state. Elementary and secondary education however, spans twelve academic years, or grades. Students spend from six to eight years in elementary school and the following four to six years are spent in secondary education. Secondary education is typically broken into two distinct parts: junior high or middle school and high school. The last four years of secondary-level

education, typically grades 9-12, is called high school. Most students will complete high school between ages 17 and 18.

Enrollment figures vary across states and districts, but according to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2003b), the average public primary school enrolls about 477 students while the average secondary school enrolls some 718 pupils. On the other hand, private schools, which were the original schools in the U.S., provide other options for primary and secondary education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2004), private schools account for about 24 percent of all elementary and secondary schools, 10 percent of all students and 12 percent of all teachers in the United States. Seventy-seven percent of all private schools have a religious affiliation while the remainder are nonsectarian. Charter schools and homeschools are on the rise. Some students in the United States between the ages of 5 and 17 participate in homeschooling. This trend is reportedly growing; in 2003, about 2 percent of the school-aged population was home schooled (NCES, 2004a) and this number increased to about 3 percent in for the 2011-2012 school year. (NCES, forthcoming). Homeschooling for children is primarily based on parental decisions. Primary motivations for choosing homeschooling as the best option for their children, parents cite concerns related to religious and moral beliefs; the environment of schools (safety, negative peer-pressure, drugs, etc.) ; and overall dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools (NCES, 2004b).

Public school elementary and secondary school teachers require licensing by their respective state teacher certification authority. As a measure of accountability for

teacher quality, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) establishes certain requirements to ensure high-quality teachers for all students.

Postsecondary Education

With even more diverse offerings than elementary education, postsecondary education is widespread across the United States. In fact, according to (NCES, 2003c), there are some 90,000 postsecondary, also known as tertiary level, institutions in America. Of this number, over 40,000 are degree-granting institutions, interestingly, a number which has doubled over the past half century and over 5,000 non-degree granting institutions that focus on vocational, technical, and career training.

The American higher education system can be described as an enterprise with over 600 public and 1,700 private, four-year colleges and universities. These tertiary level institutions offer undergraduate degrees (bachelor's) and graduate level degrees (master's and doctorate). Credited with playing a traditional role in the American landscape, especially as it relates to personal gain, there are many benefits to higher education, which as Robinson (2015) reports, "have wide implications for the vitality and success of individuals, communities, and nations" (p. 151).

Historically, these benefits have not been equally attained primarily because of the disparities in relation to social indicators such as race. The Black experience in higher education has been described as an "unfortunate one in recent history" (Bonner, Robinson, & Byrd, 2012, p. 120) mainly because of the way in which the American higher education was established and evolved. Recent attention has focused on the relationship between early academia in the U.S. and the institution of slavery and indeed,

there is a clear history of racial disparities through all levels of schooling and even at the higher education level, despite anti-discrimination laws, affirmative action, and even in spite of the inception of Brown v. Board of Education. The history of segregation predominantly resulted in the emergence of institutions that provided higher education to Blacks (Gasman & Tudico, 2008).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

These institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have according to Bonner, Robinson, & Byrd (2012), “developed a proud legacy upon which countless blacks have been lifted to a higher social standing through educational opportunity that was often not available anywhere else in academe” (p. 121). (HBCUs) are described as institutions that were established prior to 1964 and that have the principal mission of educating Black Americans (NCES, 2010). There are over 100 HBCUs with the majority being public institutions.

HBCUs were originally founded to educate the freed descendants of enslaved Africans, and remarkably their existence and contributions are undeniable. Notwithstanding, their role and functions have always been at the center of controversy and debate. With even more scrutiny couched in terms such as performance-based funding, HBCUs sit in a precarious position of having: fulfilled its mission--the production of highly competent black students who have no ambivalence about who they are and how they should use their skills and talents to maximize their own and their community's interests...[and are among]...those, who would eliminate the HBCU if they could. And there are still those Blacks who are ambivalent (LeMelle, 2002, p. 195).

So, there has been a tumultuous road to higher education for African Americans and this road directly correlates to the ways in which African Americans have been treated throughout history. HBCUs have provided a haven and fertile ground for educational success for Blacks in the country. Interestingly, during the 1800s, African Americans were also allowed to attend predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) that were mostly in the northern states.

As a matter of critical reflection of history, Roebuck and Murty (1993) posit that public HBCUs were created “to get millions of dollars in federal funds for the development of white land-grant universities, to limit African American education to vocational, and to prevent African Americans from attending white land-grant colleges” (p. 27). Notably too, as Harper, Patton, and Wooden (2009) explain, the HBCUs were generally of poorer quality than that of their white public counterparts established under the 1862 Morrill Act.

Predominantly White Institutions

The 1960s decade saw the start of dramatic increases in the number of African Americans attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Allen, 1992). However, despite these increases in African American enrollment in predominantly White institutions, HBCUs still have larger graduation success rates of Black students; there are a disproportionate number of Black students in comparison to PWIs (Allen, 1992; Easley, 1993). When PWIs were legally mandated to admit students of color, there was seemingly inadequate thought given to accommodate these new kinds of students (Saddlemire, 1996).

Scholars note that the racial and ethnic prejudices that African American students perceive and or experience while attending PWIs contributes to several feelings of inadequacy and that they do not belong, possibly leading to lack of persistence and retention (Astin and Leland, 1991; Johnson, 2003; Tinto, 1975). Indeed, the research shows that students often perceive faculty as culturally insensitive (Fleming, 1984). In this seminal work examining the experiences of Black students at PWIs and at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Fleming (1984) indicates that African American students at predominantly White institutions tend to experience difficulty developing positive relationships with White faculty.

Essentially, predominantly White institutions have not been as effective as historically Black institutions in retaining and graduating African American college students. An analysis of the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics report by Provasnik and Shafer (2004), shows that despite enrolling a significantly larger percentage of Black students, graduates of predominantly White institutions account for a disproportionately low percentage of degrees conferred upon African American students.

Much research has been done to examine the experiences of African American students at predominantly White institutions. Additionally, there is some research in the academic literature on the experiences of Black faculty at PWIs. According to Stanley (2006), the “literature on faculty of color teaching in predominantly White colleges and universities seems to be concentrated around four broad, interlocking, yet distinct themes: campus life and climate, tenure and promotion, discrimination and teaching” (p.

703). For purposes of this study, a thorough discussion of historically Black colleges and universities as well as predominantly White institutions requires framing the discussion through the lens of resistance as demonstrated by African Americans, especially African American women in the academy throughout history. This sets the context for a deep exploration of the career transitions of African American women who worked in K-12 education settings and who have transitioned to a career in higher education as a professor.

Historical Context of African American Resistance in the Academy

Hill-Collins (1999) described African American female resistance historically:

“The long-term and widely shared resistance among African American women can only have been sustained by an enduring and shared standpoint among Black women about the meaning of oppression and the actions that Black women can and should take to resist it.” (p. 202)

Because of the tumultuous experience that Black people in America have experienced, it is important to reflect on the struggles and resistance they have shown in order to offer a clear context of their current situation in reference to life in the United States and especially in relation to their educational experiences.

According to Anderson (2007) Black leaders who became literate under slavery reflected a consciousness of literacy and formal education as a means of resistance against mechanisms of oppression (anti-literacy laws) and a means to liberation and freedom. In the early 1800’s, free Blacks in the North established several institutions to

educate people of color and this movement spread through many of the northern states (Finkelman, 2006; Salzman, 1993). The first institutions to open their doors to Blacks were “Midwestern radical reformatory colleges” (Gallien, 2005, p. 3) and liberal arts schools in the early and mid-1800s. Institutions such as Middlebury, Amherst, Grinnell, Oberlin, Berea, and Wheaton were the first to open the door to education access for Blacks.

The founders of these schools were community leaders and clergymen whose goals were to educate and motivate marginalized people to rise above their circumstances and change their situations. Because these early abolitionists welcomed Blacks into their institutions, there was a sense an act of resistance to the institution of slavery and its proponents who were members of the oppressor group. This idea of resistance can be summed up as philosopher Paulo Freire (1970, 1974) gives an explanation of critical intervention or praxis. He posits that educating the oppressed and the oppressor and including them both in continuous praxis is the key to social liberation.

True praxis demands that all participants must reflect upon life’s realities and act upon the world in a valiant effort to transform the world (Gottesman, 2010). Further, Gallien and Peterson (2005) stated, “these institutions accepted both women and blacks in open defiance to societal norms and as an apocalyptic message to the plantation owners and religious leaders of the Deep South that their hegemonic stranglehold over the inalienable rights of blacks and women were at an end (p. 3).” The work of

abolitionists described above is good evidence of real change and praxis that contributed to the change in experience of African Americans in education.

In the late 1800's, Oberlin, Ohio was known for its large community of Black families. Some of them were free slaves and others were fugitive slaves. One of the main attractions of the area was Oberlin College, which was a racially integrated and co-ed campus. Oberlin College was the first to regularly accept black and female students. In 1856, Sarah Jane Woodson Early became one of the first African American women graduates of Oberlin College. She delivered a speech "Address to the Youth" at a meeting for the Ohio Colored Teachers Association in 1863.

As an advocate for education and careers in science, Sarah Woodson-Early became the first African American woman college instructor at Wilberforce University in Xenia. In 1868, she taught at Freedman's Bureau in North Carolina, which was a new school for black girls. Other accolades included being the leader of four large schools, World's Fair Woman of the Year in Chicago Representative, assisting her husband in the ministry, and holding an office in the Colored division of the women's Christian Temperance Union. She was an active classroom educator for four decades before her death in 1907.

This was a prime example of the early career development of African American women into the realm of higher education. It is important to note here that the highest level of the higher education faculty reached by this African American woman was instructor. All of this was done while participating in multiple external activities and groups. Although her path was laden with some struggle, her hard work and dedication

produced her inevitable success. Although during this time it was difficult for women to enter into the ranks of the professoriate, they learned to resist the dehumanization of systems of domination to find success in higher education faculty (Hill-Collins, 1986). As institutions became more coeducational, positions such as Dean of Men and Dean of Women were formed. Deans of Women has a direct link to the future title of higher education professor.

In 1862, Mary Jane Patterson was the first African American woman to earn a B.A. degree. She was a teacher until 1864 when she became an assistant to Fanny Jackson Coppin. From 1869-1871, she taught in Washington, D.C. at the Preparatory High School for Colored Youth later name Dunbar High School. She became its first Black principal from 1871-1872 and again from 1873-1874. During her tenure, she initiated commencements, established a teacher-training department, and upheld strong intellectual standards. She was a humanitarian who sustained a Home for the Aged and Infirm Colored People, and a member of the Colored Woman's League of Washington, D.C.

She continued to teach in the same capacity until her death in 1894. This is important to share because a common step in the career development of African American women during this time was teacher, principal, leader of women's preparatory schools, and possibly college instructor. Although some reached the professoriate, many stopped at some point along this career path. It is evident that radical social change is needed in order for African American women to gain full access into the world of the academic professoriate (Hine, 1993)

In 1865, Fanny Jackson Coppin graduated from Oberlin College and became a high school teacher at the institute for Colored Youth Institute in Philadelphia, PA. Within a year, she became the principal of the ladies department while still teaching. In 1869, she became the first African American woman to be the school principal of an entire institute. Her other accolades include the founding of homes for women, defending of women's rights, development of self-help programs, and missionary work here and abroad. She was also the first African American appointed to the position of superintendent by the board of education. She was an integral part of education in the United States until her death in 1913. "African Americans would not see significant expansion in their educational opportunities until after the Civil War (Finkelman, 2006, p. 447)." At this time education became a leading concern of Blacks in America and many "saw literacy as the key to full citizenship" (Salzman, 1993, p. 206).

By the middle nineteenth century, with the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 and 1890 as well as the establishment of women's colleges, institutions of higher education that were "once devoted primarily to the intellectual and moral development of students, was shifting from the shaping of young lives to the building of a nation" (Nuss, 1996, p. 25). Radical social change was indeed on the rise and the community of African American women intellectuals was not hiding from this need. This begs the question then: Could this have been the fertilization for the seed of Black feminism that was already planted in the hearts and heads of African American women activists?

Black women always knew of their own marginalization, but they were making others aware that their subordination was rooted in oppressions of race, class, gender,

sexuality, and nation all at once (Hill-Collins, 2009). Gottesman (2010) uses Freire's (1970,1974) work to pose the question: In an unjust society, how can and should people build movements to overturn that order? to explain this 'movement': social realities are created by people and must be transformed by those people as a task for humanity. African American women then must use their marginalization as a basis for transformative learning.

Transformative learning theory gives an illustration of adults using learning to make meaning of major life events and changes (Johnson-Bailey, 2010). African American women were ready, ready to stake their claim on the bounties awaiting them in the land of the ivory tower. African American women had to reject the majority's views of her and insist on self-definition as validation of herself as a human subject in 'their' repeated attempts to dehumanize African American women (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008).

Although their credentials were in order, the Black community was fighting for equality, and African American women were geared up to enter into the ranks of the higher education professoriate, it was not until 1921 that the first three African American woman received Doctorate degrees. Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander holds the first of these distinguished honors, as she received a PhD in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania. Sadie graduated Dunbar High School in 1915 and the University of Pennsylvania, School of Education in 1918. She received a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1919. She received the Francis Sergeant Pepper Fellowship and was the first African American women to graduate University of

Pennsylvania Law School. She was the first African American women admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1927. She was the first national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated from 1919-1923. She served on multiple city offices, received multiple honorary doctorates, was the first woman elected secretary of the national bar association, and she was appointed served on the presidential committee on civil rights by Harry Truman in 1946. Sadie practiced civil rights law until 1976, retired in 1982 and died in 1989 (Howard-Baptiste & Harris, 2014).

Georgiana Simpson was the 2nd African American woman to receive a PhD in the USA. She received the doctorate in German from the University of Chicago at the age of 55. Georgiana taught elementary school in 1885 then studied literature and language in Germany for one year and a half. In 1911, she received a B.A. in German at the University of Chicago then taught in D.C. at Dunbar High School. She then returned to the University of Chicago in 1917 to study German romanticism and endured much prejudice and racism through the Chicago Race Riots in 1919 and other nationwide debates based on African American students' accommodations in 1920. In 1921, she was featured in an NAACP publication and became a face of race relations during these racial conversations. At the age of 65, in 1931, Georgiana Simpson was offered a professorship at Howard University until 1939. She died in 1944 (Howard-Baptiste & Harris, 2014).

The third honoree was named Eva Beatrice Dykes. She attended Dunbar High School and graduated Howard University with a B.A. in 1914. She then graduated Radcliffe

College in 1917 with a 2nd B.A. and an M.A. in 1918. She was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and began teaching at Dunbar High School in 1920. It is often stated that she was the 1st African American woman to complete the requirements for a doctoral degree but because Radcliffe College held its graduation ceremony later than other universities, she was the 3rd African American women documented to actually graduate after Georgiana and Sadie. She became a member of the Howard University English Faculty in 1929. She was also a professor at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, as the chair of the English department. She was well published and renowned in the 7th day Adventist church community. She won numerous teaching awards before her death in 1986. Finally, the lived experiences of these women provide examples of African American women who were allowed to follow their own career path into the professoriate (Howard-Baptiste & Harris, 2014).

A prime example of the successful transition of an African American woman from K12 administration into the ranks of the professoriate can be found in the lived experience of Lucy Diggs Slowe. Slowe was born in Virginia in 1885, graduated from Howard University and became a high school teacher in Baltimore, Master's degree from Columbia, and she was a principal in Washington, D.C. from 1919-1922.

Lucy Diggs Slowe was the first known African American woman to hold the position of Dean of Women which was at Howard University from 1922 to 1937 (Bell-Scott, 1991). Diggs Slowe's career path transitioned her from a high school teacher to a principal to a Professor of English and Dean of Women at Howard University. During

her career, she became a founder of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. in 1908. She was the first African American woman to win a national sports title (tennis). She became an advocate for the redefining of the position Dean of Women from being more than disciplinarians and matrons to being an academic leader. She was interested in curricular and issues and the academic environment for women students. She believed Deans of Women and professors should have equal status with academic deans. Her position was one of empowerment for women in an environment she recognized as racist and sexist. Lucy Diggs Slowe faced challenges during her career development that are common to many African American women attempting to transition to the professoriate. In the face of it all, African American women will press forward (Miller & Pruitt-Logan, 2012).

Over time, as the number of women enrolling in colleges increased, the number of positions designated for African American women increased as well. A 1928 study of 263 women holding the title Dean of Women shows that many of those women held professorial positions. These women addressed issues such as housing for women students, leadership for women students', and women's self-government (Schwartz, 1997).

This study however, does not include any specific research findings on the specific experiences of African American women as Deans or professors. Other notable African American women in the history of this research are mentioned sparingly in the research. Lucy Stanton was the first African American woman to receive a certificate of completion in Literature from Oberlin College in 1850. Lutie Lytle graduated Central Tennessee Law School in 1897 and was one of the 1st African American women to earn

a law degree in the U.S. In 1898, she joined the faculty a CTLS as a law instructor and some say she was the only woman law instructor in the world at that time.

The conscious and unconscious activism of African American women toward higher educational access grows out of a history of resistance movements for marginalized people in American society and therefore in our educational institutions.

“Black feminist works portray African American Women as individuals and as a group struggling toward empowerment within an overarching matrix of domination. If power as domination is organized and operates via intersecting oppressions, then resistance must show comparable complexity” (Hill-Collins, 2000, p. 203). McKay (2007) posited that although African American women are faced with challenges in the white academy and their knowledge has been long excluded from consideration, you can still see their presence in American education as they have impacted a multiplicity of lives the world-over.

Faculty Diversity in Higher Education

The United States demographic is rapidly changing. By 2044, it is predicted that the United States will become a “majority- minority” nation, where no single group comprises more than 50 % of the population (Colby & Ortman, 2015, p. 9).

Unfortunately, universities continue to be faced with challenges related to faculty diversity. Historically thought as Chang (2002) emphasizes, postsecondary institutions did not always willingly support diversity-related initiatives. Nonetheless, while there have been some efforts to recruit faculty members from diverse backgrounds, scholars of color are still in the minority in America’s colleges and universities (Turner, Gonzalez,

& Wood, 2008). More significant than simply numbers, hiring and retaining faculty of color is essential for the success of an increasingly diverse student population, which is at the core of the purpose of institutions of higher education.

In 2013, 43 % of students enrolled in postsecondary education institutions identified as a racial minority. In contrast, racial minority faculty members accounted for only 21% of full-time faculty positions; 22% of females identified as a person of color, while 20 % of male professors identified as a person of color (National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), 2014a; NCES, 2014b). Unfortunately, this minority standard is even more exacerbated in predominantly White institutions (PWIs), much in part because scholars of color tend to work at community colleges and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (Alex-Assensoh, 2003).

Diversity, especially in terms of faculty, is espoused as a significant value of universities and over the past two decades or so, PWIs have furthered the “language of diversity” (Brayboy, 2003, p. 72) by relying upon faculty of color to help implement diversity in their institutions. The shift in the population will usher in major social and cultural changes in the United States. This has implications for the recruitment and retention of both students and faculty of color at higher education institutions.

Benefits of Faculty Diversity

Student persistence, evidenced through graduation rates, is a typical goal or metric for all universities to meet. Therefore, it is important to consider the main factors influencing student persistence in college. Student integration to the university, both

socially and academically is among the main ones and so supportive relationships with faculty members facilitate students' connectedness and integration to the university.

Further, interaction with faculty is related to student persistence and success in college (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As indicated in the literature, mentorship plays an even more instrumental role in underrepresented student persistence than it does for majority students.

Blackwell (1989) emphasized, faculty members select and mentor students with whom they share similar characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, etc. and the reverse is also true' students seek mentors from people who share similar racial and gender characteristics. Thus, in order to provide much-needed mentorship to underrepresented students, the number of faculty who share similar characteristics with students must be representative of the student population. Indeed, to better prepare students for an increasingly diverse society, colleges and universities must engage in efforts to diversify the racial and ethnic makeup of its faculty.

Students also benefit from various approaches to teaching often employed by faculty of color (Antonio, 2002; Garcia, 2000; Lee, 2010; Turner, 2000; Umbach, 2006; Vargas, 2002). Hurtado, Ponjuan, and Smith (2003) posit that diversity in pedagogical approaches and diversity in the curriculum (Robinson & Lewis, 2011) impact students' learning outcomes. Faculties of color are more apt to introduce students to an array of research and texts from women and minorities (Milem, 2003). In essence, faculty of color can serve as ambassadors that contribute to recruitment of students of color

(Antonio, 2002) while bringing new and innovative scholarship to academia (Turner, 2000; Urrieta & Méndez Benavidez, 2007). This diversity has a positive influence on minority students' persistence in college (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Hernandez, 2000) particularly in regard to underrepresented minority (URM) faculty's ability to be role models and to mentor underrepresented minority students (Stanley, 2006).

For many students, the presence of faculty of color not only indirectly communicates information about their own future prospects (Zirkel, 2012) but serves as a reminder of how people—like them—have been able to successfully navigate the educational system (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Unfortunately, the number of underrepresented faculty members is largely disproportionate to underrepresented student enrollment.

This disproportion results in fewer opportunities for underrepresented student mentorship, which may lower student persistence and college completion rates. Additionally, current underrepresented faculty members are charged with providing support to students beyond their optimal student advising loads, which places an increased burden on faculty ability to meet the performance requirements imposed by their institutions (Boyd et al., 2010; Zambrano, 2016). These over loads on faculty of color are referred to cultural taxation.

Cultural Taxation

Cultural taxation (Padilla, 1994) is a predicament that faces scholars of color and is defined as the obligation to show good citizenship toward the [academic] institution

by serving its needs for ethnic representation on committees, or to demonstrate knowledge and commitment to a cultural group, which may even bring accolades to the institution but which is not usually rewarded by the institution on whose behalf the service was performed. (p. 26) This burden, or taxation refers to a host of ways in which impositions are placed upon faculty of color because of preconceived notions that they are best suited for certain tasks due to their ethnic background and presumed knowledge of cultural differences.

Given the inequity in experiences, support, and opportunities between majority and minority faculty members, minority faculty members may feel pressure to outperform their majority counterparts to meet the tenure expectations and receive the same amount of recognition from their institutions (Tate, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In addition to a perceived higher expectation and standard for faculty of color in terms of tenure-related productivity, and due to the small number of minority faculty currently in academe, faculty of color tend to overcommit themselves to mentor minority students and provide them with much-needed support through their collegiate experience.

Faculty members of color also experience the unwritten and unspoken expectations to serve as the minority voice within their departments/units, and to perform discretionary tasks such as diversity-related committees and advising that may not contribute directly to the tenure process. This engagement in discretionary behaviors such as volunteerism, service to the community, and student mentorship contribute to the taxation of minority faculty who are already stretched thin trying to meet the explicit

tenure process requirements. This has significant implications for the recruitment, retention, and overall success of African American faculty in higher education and within the context of it being organized in a way that is very hierarchy-based and privileges dominant groups.

Current Status of African American Women in the Professoriate

African American women represent the largest female demographic in the workplace (NABCP, 2014), yet their career and life experiences have been underrepresented in scholarship. Additionally, their representation in the hallowed walls of academia are not representative of the overall workforce trends. Faculties of color remain seriously underrepresented, making up 17% of total full-time faculty. In the past 20 years, more than 300 authors have addressed the status and experience of faculty of color in academe (Turner, Gonzales, & Wood, 2008), but the problem persists.

In fact, The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2007) reports that of 173, 395, only 3.4% (n=5839) of the full professors at degree granting institutions in the U.S. were Black. The reports from the NCES (2009) show 49, 650 women were assigned to the full professoriate with only 4.7% (n=2331) being African American women. In 2011, there were 52, 860 women designated as full professors and only 4.8% (n=2533) of them were Black. In the same year, there were 6, 517 Black full professors in U.S. degree granting institutions. Only a little more than one third of them were African American women. From 2009 to 2011 the academy awarded 3,210 full professorships to women with only 202 full professorships being announced to African American women across the nation. The statistics can be manipulated in many ways, but the fact still remains

that there is a scarcity of African American women in the professoriate. According to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2007), ...there are more than 33,000 African Americans teaching full-time at colleges and universities in the United States. But the progress into faculty ranks is so slow that, at the current rate, it will take about a century and a half for the percentage of African-American faculty to reach parity with the percentage of blacks in the nation's population (para. 1).

There is an unfortunate cycle that perpetuates this problem as "the absence of African American faculty members lessens the probability that African American students will complete graduate and professional programs at the same rate as White American students" (Allen, 2000, p. 113). This is reiterated by the research that shows that the most persistent and statistically significant predictor of recruitment, enrollment, and graduation of African American graduate and professional students is the presence of African American faculty members (Epps, 1998). In essence, this promotes the academic prestige and hierarchy that places African American students and faculty at a disadvantage.

Higher Education Hierarchy

In describing the prestige hierarchy of the U.S. professoriate Allen (2000) explains that the underrepresentation and low academic status of African American faculty members is a persistent problem. Additionally, he points out that research shows that this continued underrepresentation is complicated by the concentration of these limited numbers of African Americans to the lower levels of the "academic prestige system" (p. 112). The rank of professor (full) is described as a "highly valued, powerful status level in which African American faculty members continue to be vastly

underrepresented (Allen, 2000, p. 113). While there is a clear increase in the numbers of women in the professoriate, there is still a gap, albeit narrowing, and these women continue to experience their higher education professorial positions differently from men, as is shown by fewer assistant, associate, full, and tenured women professors, and on average lower salaries (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c). The situation for African American women in tenure-track positions is even more challenging than for women overall. Importantly too, the status of African American women in administrative positions is also one that leaves much to be desired.

The representation of African American females in higher education administration is also lower than that of their racial and gender counterparts. They are generally promoted at a slower rate, receive the lowest salaries, and teach only part-time. They are mostly found among the lowest ranks of the professorate, primarily in non-tenured positions within the traditional disciplines of education, the social sciences, and the professions (Gregory, 2001; Howard-Vital, 1989). The significance of this issue is rooted in the racial and social injustices presented by many institutions of higher learning.

Universities claim to offer an equal educational opportunity for all, but that opportunity does not seem to extend to the professional communities of those very institutions. With these statistics as evidence, it is clear that African American women must create a community of academic success rooted in Black feminism. From the voice of bell hooks, we know that African American women must take action to expose the

connectivity of racism, sexism, and classism in the faculty and organizational ranks of higher education (Lutz, 1993). Academicians can no longer deny this interconnectivity. In addition to exploring the acts of resistance from various African American women in history in the field of higher education, it is important to consider leadership, in terms of theories and characteristics of leadership as they relate to this resistance shown through the years.

Overview of Leadership

Effective leadership has been historically defined based on White males and rigid bureaucratic systems that are patriarchal and value individualism (Curry, 2000).

Northouse (2004), Yukl & Van Fleet, (1992), and Bass (1990) offer a comprehensive review of leadership theories by compiling major theories on leadership effectiveness and leadership influences. Their research provides a categorization of key theoretical approaches to leadership: trait, behavioral, contingency/ situational, power/influence, and transformational theories. Northouse's (2004) research on traditional leadership theory also provides some insight on women as leaders, but not much is shared where race and social class combine with gender.

Goleman (1998) states effective leaders all have a high degree of emotional intelligence. They encompass self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills that allow them to build an environment of encouragement and collaboration where the leader is transparent. Additionally, Helgesen (1990) observed and interviewed four executive women in large organizations for the purpose of defining feminine principles of leadership and capturing how women think and act in leadership roles. In

the Feminine Advantage, Helgesen points to the caring nature of women and the ability to be intuitive thinkers as the primary differences between men and women's leadership. According to Helgesen (1990), women can use these differences to their advantage and thereby become successful as leaders. It is imperative that these differences are not in conflict with the organization's culture and norms.

Organizational leadership refers to the practice of leadership where individuals are held to norms, values, and beliefs of the organization's dominant culture (Parker, 2004). One underlying assumption of members within an organization is that leaders look, act, and think in ways that reflect the dominant culture of the organization (Parker, 2004). What happens when the newest leaders do not fit the organization's definitions of cultural behavior? Cox (2004) posits that differences in cultural norms and values among various ethnic groups will manifest in differing work-related behaviors. These work behaviors mimic social standards of behavior for White and Black ethnic groups specifically. An organization's culture is justified through norms and values, and perceived through underlying assumptions of the majority of people within the organization (Schein, 1992). This illustrates the necessity for a leader's values to be in tandem with the organization's culture and vice versa.

Gostnell (1996) asserts that leadership is "diverse, contextual, interdependent, and situational" and is practiced through "a paradigm built upon the concepts of connectedness, and service" (p. 205). The ability to apply leadership theory to African American women leaders' experiences is not always clear because the traditional theories are created with the majority, White male scholar in mind. Allen (1995) argues

that the previously silenced voices of African American women challenge the traditional and dominant leadership, representing the move toward a more comprehensive analysis of leadership. According to Allen (1995), because models and theories of leadership focus on elite, white men, there is a lack of understanding of ways that social power, dominance, and control interacts with African American women's leadership.

Parker (2004) suggests an inclusive framework of leadership, which supports intersectionality as a means of interpreting and analyzing leadership. Intersectionality suggests that the lived leadership experiences of African American women in predominantly white organizations are not located within separate spheres of race, gender or social class. Rather these spheres intersect and shape structural and political aspects that are not captured within traditional feminist discourse. African American women then constantly face the challenge of navigating the socially constructed definitions of leadership within a dominant organization's culture. They adapt to the norm by offering new meanings and greater options for leading based on the multiple perspectives they bring to the leadership experience.

Bell and Nkomo (1992) argue that only questioning the applicability of leadership theory to the race, gender, and social class of the leader undermines the assumption that universal organization and management theories exist. By bringing to the conversation new and previously silenced voices, we can move beyond questioning and we can begin to challenge traditional socially constructed theories of leadership. This ideology presents an opportunity to reevaluate the transformational leadership

theory with respect to African American women as they transition for the K12 realm into the professoriate.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is concerned with ethics, emotions, values, and standards, including satisfying followers' needs and treating them as human beings (Northouse, 2004). Transformational leadership theory emerged from the work of Burns (1979), who viewed leadership as a shared process that requires followers to "transcend their own self-interest for the good of the group, organization, or society" (p. 53). According to Burns (1979), transformational leaders seek to raise the consciousness of their followers by instilling values and ideals such as liberty, justice, equality, and humanitarianism. The basic premise of this theory is that the leader starts with development of a vision or a picture of the future to transform the organization, which may excite, energize, and motivate followers. The leader's passion for this vision may create an inner belief in followers that they, too, will be transformed in some way. Transformational leaders influence the process of mobilizing power to change social systems and reform institutions (Yukl, 1989). In light of such, transformational leaders are recognized as change agents within organizations who empower others to accomplish great things (Northouse, 2004). The emergence of the transformational approach to leadership represented a new paradigm in leadership theory (Bass, 1990).

Bass's (1990) survey of leadership research and theory reports special relationships within leadership: women and leadership and Blacks and leadership. Even with this acknowledgement, women in leadership is not addressed in respect to race and

Blacks in leadership is not addressed in respect to women. Yukl and Van Fleet (1992) do not explicitly address leadership in terms of race, gender, or social class, but rather allude to the “growing recognition that new theories and methods are needed to describe leadership processes that unfold over time in social systems” (p. 186). As such, the nuances of leadership and leadership processes must consider contextual factors such as race, gender, and identity as being important elements.

Connected Leadership

Gostnell’s (1996) study which is an extension of transformational leadership, presents The Paradigm of Connected Leadership which proposes that leadership is: ordinary and situational, an expression of self in action. It is based on multiple realities and wisdom gained at the juncture of race, gender, and class, socially constructed; African American women’s social construction of leadership is influenced by historical and cultural roots, an interdependent, shared, and collective effort; empowering rather than controlling, representative of a culturally pluralistic society, purposeful; provides clarity and a sense of direction during tumultuous times or when it is not possible to provide an instant solution, responsive to controversial issues.

African American women in positions of leadership must be prepared to speak out and stand alone, often contradicting their historical upbringing to “tread cautiously,” as leadership many times involves risk-taking and stepping outside the circle of what is known and secure. Crenshaw (1991) states that when one discourse does not acknowledge the strengths of another, the power that each attempts to challenge is strengthened. Society uses the dominant culture’s master narrative to interpret and

categorize the world for African American women. African American women make sense of their own existence by recalling, reflecting, and reviewing stories that make up individual life narratives (Johnson-Bailey 2010).

In order for the leadership experiences of women, and for African American women in particular, to become incorporated into the mainstream body of leadership literature and theories, they must be studied from their perspectives and on their own terms rather than in relation to the experiences and perspectives of predominantly white, male leaders (Fennell, 2005; Shakeshaft, 1989). Higher education is an important site for Black feminist intellectual activity (Hill-Collins, 2009) and so it provides a good context for learning more about leaders from diverse backgrounds.

Institutions of higher education must establish multicultural organizations in which a variety of cultures are accepted and incorporated into the organization. The diverse cultures norms and values must be recognized and included in conversations about the progress of the institution and thereby society (Cox & Blake, 1991). According to hooks (1990), feminist perspectives offer a universal, collective representation of women's experiences and do not effectively capture the lived experiences of African American women.

Hill-Collins (2009) expounds upon the idea of sociological equality within race, class, sex, and nation through a lens called the matrix of domination. She discusses the outsider-within paradigm, which is evident in the professoriate. It is a travesty to critically discuss African American women in the professoriate as an individual identity within femaleness or blackness. By not combining race, class, gender, and nation in any

discussion of the oppressed, society misses a large part of the problem (Hill-Collins, 2009). It is within this feminist perspective that this portion of the literature review is shaped and exposes traits of successful leaders and acts of leadership as experienced by African American women that have transferred from K-12 into the organizational structures of the higher education professoriate.

African American Women's Success and Leadership in the Professoriate

African American women school leaders are described as courageous while displaying strength and resilience as they face both racism and sexism in their efforts to succeed (Carter, 2003). Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) offer seven recommendations for women about how to play by the political rules of the academy.

Those recommendations include the following: (1) Find out what is going on, (2) Sharpen one's political skills such as volunteering, managing people, running meetings, and making effective presentations, (3) Assume opposition when consensus is unfathomable, (4) be appropriately aggressive and persistent, (5) Learn to ask "what's in it for me?" before agreeing to take on more tasks, (6) Use one's contacts to facilitate networking, (7) Recognize the battles worth fighting for and their value to one's career. In addition to these recommendations, it is important to consider the cultural and community context within which the leader will work.

Roesner (1990) suggests that a woman's successful leadership orientation is marked by a concern for community and culture. Women generally concern themselves with the importance of establishing relationships and maintaining connections with others. Women are likely to critically examine the past, ask the difficult questions,

promote collective visioning, focus on the development of others, and respond with the good of the community at heart (Irwin, 1995). Researchers have identified other characteristics that describe how women function in leadership roles.

Gillett-Karam (1994) used four behaviors to characterize women in leadership. These behaviors included (a) vision behavior-women leaders take appropriate risks to bring about change; (b) people behavior-meaning women leaders provide care and respect for individual differences; (c) influence behavior because women act collaboratively, and (d) values behavior in which women leaders spend time building trust and openness. Further, Funk's (1993) study added to the advantages that women bring to the role of educational leader. Her findings add successful traits such as a willingness to listen and think globally, paying attention to detail, flexibility, and having a strong work ethic. Because they are living through their experiences as girls, mothers, daughters, and sisters, women leaders tend to use people-oriented and collaborative styles to construct a school family in which everyone works together.

Grimes (2003) studied the leadership of African American women in higher education using the integrated leadership framework of Astin and Leland (1991). The framework is based on the idea of collective action rather than the leader-follower notion, and the commitment to improving women's lives. Using this integrated framework, Grimes (2003) suggests that race-based, gender-based, and institutional-based issues created the lens through which the women in the study processed the actions and culture of their institutions. These experiences shape the way in which African American women interact at PWIs.

A study by Allison (2008) examines the identity negotiation and communication strategies that Black professors employ when interacting in predominantly White institutional settings. Participants included sixteen African American professors across five universities. Their data was collected through a focus group meeting, individual interviews, and surveys. Findings suggest that Black professors do not change their identities when they communicate in ways that are significantly different from their normal communication behavior; however, they do communicate in strategic ways in an effort to be viewed as professional, credible, and approachable, by both their colleagues and their students. Although these findings share insight into women in leadership or Blacks in leadership, there is no intricate mention of the specific interactions and experiences of African American women as successful leaders in the role of higher education professor.

Alfred (2001) examined the developmental experiences that contributed to a successful career (measured by tenure and promotion) of five Black tenured female faculty at a predominantly White research university. The study explored the strategies the women used to successfully navigate the White-dominated academic culture of the higher education scholarly community. The findings indicate that participants found professional success in the White institutional culture by creating positive images of self-definition and rejecting stereotypical images of themselves as Black women, finding a safe space where they could reaffirm themselves as Black women, knowing the academic culture and its role expectations, becoming visible within their disciplinary and

institutional cultures, and maintaining a fluid life structure from which they could draw the power necessary to negotiate White-dominated cultures.

Because this study is focused on the career transition of African American women from working in administrative roles in K-12 settings to the higher professoriate, it is imperative to share the perceptions about successful leadership of women who reached the expert rank in one realm as they become novice in another.

Fennell's (1999) study interviewed 6 women principals on their perception of leadership, which exposed some personal characteristics of female leaders. The central theme of the findings was that female leaders are believed to need to have a clear sense of their own vision and beliefs. Further, Hopkins (2000) surveyed 43 principals to determine their ideas for traits of successful school leaders. Some of the traits that were shared included a state vision for the campus, a plan to achieve that vision, clearly stating goals and expectations for students, staff, and parents; being trustworthy and honest with students and staff, helping develop leadership skills in others, and developing strong teachers while cultivating good teaching practices. As the leader who sets the direction of the school, the principal's skills with people are crucial to the success of the position.

Curry (2000) states that to know how successful leaders develop, one must know and understand something about the developmental paths leaders have traveled. Successful leadership may be described as the compatibility of the meaningfulness of a system between an organization and a leader (Curry, 2000).

The belief in one's ability to successfully perform or accomplish a given task can support the process of high career achievement. Self-efficacy allows people to believe in their capability to perform a task, specifically their capacity to mobilize cognitive and other resources required to execute a course of action successfully (Baldwin, 2006). A successful administrator [professor] "is committed, independent, dominant, active, adventurous, sensitive, secure, and self-confident" (Harvard, 1986, p.19) and needs to have the personal self-belief that they can be successful.

Snow (2011) shared successful acts of African American women in faculty ranks based on a study conducted to share the participants' views of their journey into the professoriate. This study exposed three themes within successful acts: success in publishing, giving back to the community, and experiencing the journey as it evolves. Accordingly, collaboration, community, and collegiality are needed for

African American women to successfully navigate a career in faculty, and especially so at a PWI. Collaboration is necessary to alleviate feelings of isolation and frustration often felt by African American women attempting to create a pathway to success in higher education academia. Collegiality is an important part of success in any organization, but in higher education building networks is a major part of forward progress. Connections must be made within the official ranks of the ivory tower. The close ties are built in the informal, unofficial connections made between other members of the professorate. Many times knowing how to interact in the latter situations can greatly impact the progress of African American women at PWIs. "Modifying lifestyles to fight the

personal isolation, establishing research agendas, creating networks within and outside of the department, and limiting activities that do not contribute to professional advancement are all part of the academic life of African American female faculty members” (Atwater, 1995, p. 239). Numerous studies have indicated that positive interpersonal relationships and support systems are important factors for a successful career.

In an academic setting, supportive networks and hospitable academic environments are particularly important for Black faculty women, who often seek meaningful inclusion in various types of professional, social, and religious networks. These networks provide a source of support, strength, and encouragement that enables them to persevere in often stressful and competitive academic environments. Support systems in the lives of Black faculty women have been found to be important because of these women's needs for guidance, strength, and encouragement to help them negotiate academic settings that are often unfriendly and isolating. Such support systems have become even more significant for Black faculty women who are attempting to juggle the demands of marriage, family, and career simultaneously (Gregory, 2001; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Hill-Collins, 1986; Souto & Ray, 2007; Atwater, 1995; Harley, 2008). It is this support that can help encourage persistence and resilience.

Resilience is sometimes described as “the glue that keeps us functioning when we are confronted with life’s misfortunes or challenges (Joseph, 1994, p. 25).” Stevens (2002) defined resilience as moral steadfast perseverance, demonstrated by hardiness and courage in the face of dangerous and hazardous conditions. Resilience is basically

the ability to “bounce back” (Joseph, 1994). In order to be successful, African American women professors must learn to locate appropriate support programs, identify key people for networking and mentoring, and seek spaces for accurate information and assistance within their departments. This is the basis for building social and cultural capital in the academic community.

According to Freeman (1997), cultural capital consists of the assets and behaviors on which individuals can draw to meet a certain set of established values in society. These values are generally established by the majority group and encompass behaviors such as the way people speak and dress. Helgesen (1990) argues that women place less importance on the hierarchy, use more personal experience, focus more on how actions will affect others, and how the business process will affect the organization’s bottom line. The question, “how do African American women experience leadership?” was the focus of a study by Stokes (1996). Using an ethno-science methodology, Stokes found that the participants experienced negative leadership experiences attributed to their gender and race. The participants described their marginalized leadership experiences in terms of not living up to or measuring up to the Eurocentric standards, values, beliefs, and expectations that dominate American society. Consensus among the group was a process of validating and revalidating their competency to lead. The process of validation and revalidation involved recognizing how the political and power games are played, not succumbing to the system, and having a reservoir of strength. Other studies have sought to identify leadership characteristics in African American women.

Porter's (2002) case study of successful senior-level executive status African American women within corporate America sought to determine barriers to advancement and to identify leadership similarities among the participants. This study used a multi-case study, emancipatory research design. The findings from this study indicated African American women prefer participatory leadership and recognize collaboration and teamwork as necessary tools for developing one's leadership in a corporate environment. The participants in this study agreed that African American women must prove their leadership abilities by their interactions with those in positions of power. Further, Taylor (2004) examined issues of race, gender, and power on the leadership influence of another kind of leader, an African American woman principal. In this study, Taylor found that in order for an African American woman to be successful in leadership positions in predominantly white environments, she must play by the rules of traditional patriarchy. Again, the majority of these studies are problematic, in that they speak from a White female perspective or black male perspective and does not include the voice or perspectives of African American women

Snow (2011) offers a list specific acts necessary in order to be successful in the professoriate: a vast array of published works, effective mentor systems, positive personal relationship, appropriate support systems, and informal/formal networks. The importance of mentoring, particularly for African American women, is an essential key to professional success.

Mentorship for African American Women

Mentorship is a special type of nurturing support system that has been used extensively, both formally and informally, in a variety of career sectors. Hill and Ragland (1995) addressed the following three main functions of mentoring: (1) pointing the way, (2) providing support, and (3) challenging the mentee to strive for excellence.

Felder (1992) contends that women who want to succeed in any profession need a mentoring relationship. African American women need effective mentors because of (1) the paucity of African American women in senior level positions; (2) the fact that mentors tend to select protégés who share similar cultural and social attribute or background characteristics such as race and ethnicity; and (3) the social risks inherent in a non-minority person mentoring a minority one (Bassett, 1991). Although White males and other non-African American groups have successfully mentored African American women professors, some researchers have found that mentees are usually better served when their mentors are more like them (Johnson, 1998; Wilson, 1999; Allen et al., 1995). In addition to the support provided through mentoring, social networking also plays an important role in the success of African American women.

In Stanley's (2006) large qualitative study focusing on the experiences of faculty of color teaching in predominantly White colleges and universities, with critical race theory as the theoretical framework, mentoring emerged as a major theme across the narratives. Stanley (2006) pointed out that many faculty of color described mentors as people who played a major role in shaping their experiences and identities as scholars in the academy. This mentorship helped with not only teaching but with citizenship and

development of leadership potential in their respective areas. This mentorship was not restricted to single-race or single-gender relationships.

Research on the experiences of African Americans in higher education also demonstrates that strong social networks and support are essential tools for success for African American women professors (Baber, 2010; Barnett, 2004, Bradley & Sanders, 2003; Cole, 1994; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Fries-Britt, 2002; Foster, 2003; Gallien & Peterson, 2005). African American women must capitalize on their support networks in order to positively impact their success. Similar to family, role models and informal and formal professional networks provide critical support for African American women professors personally and professionally. For African American women, role models tend to be members of the family, teachers, community leaders, religious leaders, and other colleagues (Rusher, 1996; Miller and Vaughn, 1997; Scott, 1997; Wolfman, 1997; Chatman, 1991). Numerous studies have indicated that positive interpersonal relationships and support systems are important factors for a successful career.

In an academic setting, supportive networks and hospitable academic environments are particularly important for Black faculty women, who often seek meaningful inclusion in various types of professional, social, and religious networks. These networks provide a source of support, strength, and encouragement that enables them to persevere in often stressful and competitive academic environments. Support systems in the lives of Black faculty women have been found to be important because of these women's needs for guidance, strength, and encouragement to help them negotiate academic settings that are often unfriendly and isolating. Such support systems have

become even more significant for Black faculty women who are attempting to juggle the demands of marriage, family, and career simultaneously (Gregory, 2001; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Hill-Collins, 1986; Souto & Ray, 2007; Atwater 199; Harley 199).

In Howard-Vital's (1989) review of the literature, it was evident that researchers identified a need for more studies to focus on African American women in various capacities in predominantly white higher education institutions. The researchers of the time had the forward thinking impetus to predict an increased scarcity of African American women in academia without an increase in paradigm generation and examination to show how mainstream ideologies illuminate, obscure, or predict experiences of African American women in higher education. Howard-Vital (1989) states that "Without this intellectual activity, African-American women will become invisible, isolated, and powerless" (p. 189). There are measures that African American women can use to push and encourage themselves and others like them toward success.

It is the innate strength of these women that have been integral in supporting their success. Self-efficacy, cultural capital, resilience, and the importance of support networks have been identified as essential characteristics of those women and their success. Themes found throughout research on African American women success in higher education include negotiating environments, affinity and connectedness, spiritual support, family influence, macro-perspectives on race, motivation, family expectations, role models, and mentorship (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Other strategies are mentioned in the research on African American women as leaders. Bell & Nkomo (1999) for example, state that in order to be a successful African American women leader one must learn to

straddle between meeting the demands of the White dominated academy and staying true to the intrinsic goals rooted in an African American woman's own social and cultural identity.

There is a scarcity of research about African American women and successful acts of leadership that opens the door for more studies including the career transition of African American women leaders from K-12 to the professoriate. Although it is difficult to document a specific career path into the professoriate, research reveals common qualities possessed by successful professors. This research coupled with research on the experiences of African American women in the professoriate provide an opportunity to document those experiences and focus on the career path of African American women transitioning from K-12 education settings to the higher education professoriate.

Black Identity Development

African American students experience personal identity development in stages. Their acceptance of their skin color varies according to their life experiences. Many 4year universities miss an opportunity to access the full potential of their students of color because they do not pay attention to the needs of these students based on their actual level of self-identity and awareness of 'being' black. Ritchey 2014 states, "They [PWIs] continue to operate under the melting pot theory, where everyone is expected to fit into the mainstream White middle class value structure. This creates barriers and a climate that is not conducive for students whose identities fall outside of being White and middle class" p. 101.

In kind, African American women travel along their life journey and encounter experiences of racism, classism, sexism, and ageism that change their ideologies and perceptions of the world. Throughout this life journey their view of who they are and how they view their own experiences is ever-changing. As they transition from childhood, to adulthood, and into their various careers, their self-identity is constantly evolving. These identity changes are a necessary process for African American women to recognize their strengths in self-awareness and to utilize this attribute to focus on their own career success. African American women in higher education must become aware of their own level of cultural identity in an effort to address the identity development of their students (Ritchey, 2014).

In 1971 William Cross wrote about the various levels of Black identity development and termed this evolution toward full identity awareness or Nigrescence. He identified five levels of identity development as follows: 1. Pre-encounter Stage- Little emphasis is given to race and someone does not realize that they have been raised with White westernized ideologies, because it is so embedded in their culture; 2. Encounter Stage- An event happens that shapes how one views their race and this encounter has a personally significant impact to spur change in their thinking; 3. Immersion-Emersion Stage- Black people will begin to shed their old worldview and construct a new frame of reference with the information they now have about race.

Although change has not occurred, a commitment to change is present; 4. Internalization Stage-Black people think critically about their new racial identity. They embrace what it means to be Black and have Black self-love that exudes into the

universe; 5. Internalization-Commitment Stage- The focus is on the long-term interest of Black affairs over an extended amount of time by achieving a healthy racial identity with internalized positive feelings about oneself. Cross 1991 combined stages four and five to encompass four total levels of identity awareness toward Nigrescence (Ritchey, 2014; Cross, 1991).

The historical context of this research can be explained through an examination of Nigrescence. African American women have escaped the illiterate throngs of slavery, to becoming students in universities, to accepting positions in K12 as teachers and leaders, to supporting women as college deans into the current titled position of professor. It is imperative to identify the level of Black identity experienced by African American women in an effort to best provide evidence of the value of their lived experiences as they transition into new careers (Tillman, 2002; Ritchey, 2014; Cross, 1991).

Career Transitions

As illustrated earlier in the chapter, the landscape of higher education is changing. Changes are occurring both in terms of diversity (race, gender, and ethnicity etc.) of students and faculty members and also in terms of the numbers of newer faculty with prior careers. For example, in doctoral granting institutions, 20% of newer faculty who have 10 years or less in the professoriate are job or career changers to postsecondary education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004c). Further, the increase in faculty who identify as women also continues to increase and have reached

record-breaking numbers. From 1992- 2011, there was an increase in women faculty from 38% to 44% nationally (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; 2012a).

While there is a clear increase in the numbers of women in the professoriate, there is still a gap, albeit narrowing, and these women continue to experience their higher education professorial positions differently from men, as is shown by fewer assistant, associate, full, and tenured women professors, and on average lower salaries (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c). This research seeks to fill the gap related to how African American women who have transitioned to higher education professorial positions from careers in K-12 educational settings experience these transitions.

In addition to the scarcity of research about adults who transition to new careers in the professoriate and about African American women who transition from K-12 education settings to the professoriate in particular, there may not even be adequate theoretical frameworks to explain their transitions. Cherrstrom (2014) suggested, “traditional theory may not explain the intersection and transitions of increasing numbers of faculty with prior careers and women faculty in examination of higher education careers” (p. 116). While not delineated as a variable in the research, Cherrstrom’s suggestion that traditional theory is inadequate to explain or frame our understanding of how African American women transition into the professoriate. These transitions in conjunction with the intersecting social structures complicate the experiences of African American women and often interact with the barriers that are present in transitioning to and working in higher education.

Disadvantages/Barriers in the Professoriate

Dominant social powers use race, gender, and other identity categories to define the social status of the oppressed. Society uses these constructs to exclude those who are different (Crenshaw, 1991). It is also a barrier when African American women “struggle to break with the hegemonic modes of seeing, thinking, and being that block our capacity to see ourselves appositionally, to imagine, describe, and invent ourselves in ways that are liberatory ”(hooks, 1992 p. 2). Snow (2011) found several common challenges in a study of black female faculty members regarding success along their journey toward the professoriate. The challenges they experienced while navigating the faculty ranks of higher education include: alienation, isolation, marginalization, family and career stress, and the strain of the organizational structures. They also found barriers within departmental politics, discrimination/racism, and non-appreciation and disrespect of research interests from other faculty members.

Research conducted by Catalyst (2004), a non-profit research advisory organization that promotes the advancement of women of color in corporate America, indicates a small number of African American women have successfully navigated barriers such as lack of mentors, lack of access to formal and informal networking systems, and lack of high visibility to advance into positions traditionally open mainly to white men. Robertson, Mitra, & Van Delinder (2005) identified that the social isolation of African American women may produce four modes of adaptation: (1) affirmation mode (2) assimilation mode (3) withdrawal mode (4) separation mode. Each mode describes the way in which African American women professors attempt to deal

with and maneuver through their new and sometimes unwelcoming campus environment.

The affirmation mode depicts a movement with the dominant culture wherein they may have several interactions with Whites both personal and professional; and have developed a sense of partnership with Whites. The assimilation mode of adaptation represents a movement toward the dominant culture in which she may reject Black culture and ideology for a more 'favorable' White experience. The withdrawal mode of adaptation is a movement away from the dominant culture in which they may tolerate the White experience but cling firmly to Black culture as a source of identity. Lastly, the separation mode of adaptation is a movement against the dominant culture in which the ideology of White culture is completely rejected and the Black experience and culture is revered and esteemed as 'best'. These detailed descriptions could serve as a great tool to assist universities in providing support when establishing successful African American women professors in various departments.

Many women find a lack of professional socialization to be a barrier to their success in academia (Souto & Ray, 2007; Crawford & Smith 2005). Intraracial tensions are described when Blacks create biases and prejudices against other Blacks based on issues of good/bad hair; light/dark skin; as well as the Oreo complex that many Blacks encounter when others believe that they talk and act White (Johnson-Bailey, 2010). Blacks are not a homogenous group and neither are women, so to be a Black woman is to incite higher expectations and greater standards within academia including different needs, perspectives, campus networks, and personal affinity groups.

Self-segregation exists although segregation mandated by law is illegal, many campus faculty environments suffer from segregation based on social, economic, and other reasons not based on laws imposed by the government and continue to flourish as an inescapable reality (Bennett, 1998). Additional research that describes marginalization of African American women in the workplace reveals that there are several factors that can contribute to this marginalization.

Hine (1996) describes three factors attributed to the marginalization of African American women in the workplace: (1) a society that espouses equality, but does not always practice it; (2) lack of awareness by those in the dominant group; and (3) gender issues and racial issues are sometimes blurred, particularly for women of color. This marginal role creates a feeling of alienation, and oftentimes discomfort for the African American women (Dasher-Alston, 1991; Moses, 1989; Rusher, 1996).

Many studies document the fact that African American women often feel stretched to their limits with their ability to balance personal and professional responsibilities (Edwards, 1997; Rusher, 1996; Moses, 1989; Reid-Merritt, 1996; Wolfman, 1997). Particularly in instances when African American women are few in number on their individual campuses, the competing demands for role models and representation can be overwhelming. These feelings of being overwhelmed can impede professional as well as personal success. This is further compounded when these few African American are taxed with the additional responsibilities as described in the concept of cultural taxation previously discussed earlier in this chapter.

In a study of four African American women in higher education administration positions, it was concluded that time demands can negatively impact relationships with spouses, significant other and other family members (Scott, 1997). Many women find a lack of professional socialization to be a barrier to their success in academia (Souto and Ray, 2007; Crawford and Smith 2005). Further, findings from a study of fourteen senior level African American women administrators found that African American women tend to overload themselves with commitments that impact their ability to balance (Chatman, 1991). Historically, African American women have demanded much from themselves because of the necessity to uplift their community. Many women find a lack of professional socialization to be a barrier to their success in academia (Souto & Ray, 2007; Crawford and Smith 2005). “The future of the academy depends in large measure on its ability to nurture the academic talent of all its faculty, particularly those Black faculty women whose numbers are steadily decreasing” (Gregory, 2001, p.135). Some students [professors] feel that they are “the only one” within their departments. They feel isolated, marginalized, invisible, silenced within a discourse of white students and faculty (Souto & Ray, 2007; Mosley, 1980; Hill-Collins, 1986; Howard-Vital, 1989).

Advantages/Benefits in the Professoriate

In this section, I present excerpts from various African Americans in academe that speak directly to the benefits or advantages of being in academia. In Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (2008), for example, Johnson-Bailey recalls her own personal advantages to being and African American women in the professoriate: “I’ve dipped my toe in the Nile, seen the stars from Down Under, met incredible scholars, and had the wonderful

freedom that comes with being in the professoriate—the luxury of being paid to nurture my intellect and to live in my own mind (p. 317).” Another excerpt follows: “Today, as African American women move “inside” institutions of higher education, they now have “access to information about the decision-making processes, resources, opportunities, and strategies that make up organizational activity...it is also helpful in opening up opportunities for other Black women” (Proudfoot & Thomas, 1999, p. 4). Additionally, Souto & Ray (2007) highlight that although obstacles and challenges such as racism, sexism, personal and professional balance and a lack of collegiality continue to be a threat to the African American women navigating through the professoriate, she has persevered because the family, church, mentors, and other networks have supported her ascension up the career ladder. “We challenge all faculty, administrators, and policymakers to problematize their assumptions, examine their practices and policies, and seek to get “beyond the big house” model in which white faculty are privileged” (p. 283).

It is important for the continued development of sound research on the experiences of Black faculty women to help address the challenges and benefits of having Black faculty women in the ‘ivory tower’ (Gregory, 2001). First and foremost in order to actively change the faculty and ultimately the world, “[Black] Women must discover the power within themselves” (Green & King 2001, p. 158). These quotes highlight the resistance and resilience shown by as well as what is required of African American women if they are to be successful in their careers, especially too for those

who seek to transition from K-12 education settings to higher education in professorial positions.

Summary

The literature review in this chapter provides a historical foundation of the United States education system. It describes the structure, experiences of African Americans with the system of education in the past as well as in contemporary contexts. It provides insight in the work already done in terms of the research conducted related to issues affecting African American women and their career paths into the professoriate. It also describes the hierarchical nature of the higher education system and how African American women tend to be positioned within this system. It was important for this review of the literature to begin with a historical viewpoint of the experiences of African American women as they share a dual existence of being black and being a woman in an educational institution of higher learning.

Ultimately, the research is concerned with the successful pathways of African American women from a career in k-12 education settings into the ranks of the professoriate. There is inadequate research on the success of African American women in the professoriate and so this study presents a review of the lived experiences of African American women who have successfully navigated the abovementioned pathway to success.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology for the study. It includes the research overview, methodological rationale, and research design, concluding with a discussion of the data collection, management and analysis methods used in this study.

The purpose of this study was to explore and interpret the professional and personal experiences of African American women who transitioned from K-12 educational settings to the professoriate. The research addresses the specific issues experienced by African American women in terms of their transition into the professoriate. It aims to add to the literature in this field by specifically taking a deeper look at African American women who have successfully transitioned from a career in K12 educational administrators to the professoriate at a four-year collegiate institution.

By learning more about these experiences, this research adds critical perspectives to the discussion of African American women in the academy by changing the grand narrative away from a deficit-based approach to one focused on success. Further, this invaluable knowledge may be beneficial to others seeking to transition into a career in academia.

Methodological Rationale

Throughout history, humans have sought knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired through experience, authority, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning and finally the scientific approach (Whyte, 1989). Scientific research is a systematic way to acquire

practical and reliable information that affects a meaningful problem. Research in the social sciences differs from research in the natural sciences because it involves the study of complex human behavior. This type of inquiry does not result in precise predictions but produces meaningful knowledge about phenomena. Educational research uses a variety of methodological approaches generally classified as either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative research uses object measurement in a controlled setting to gather numeric data that are used to answer questions or test predetermined hypotheses. Qualitative research uses different forms of inquiry that focus on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in a natural setting and does not begin with a hypothesis (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The nature of the research problem determines the methodology or methodological approach. By choosing to use qualitative research, certain assumptions are made that reflect a particular stance. This is further shaped by specific paradigms. A paradigm is a “basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 157.) The paradigms influence how research questions are selected as well as the methods used to study those questions. The paradigm also informs the specific techniques and procedures of the research design. Qualitatively designed studies are naturalistic because the research occurs in real world settings with interviews made up of open-ended questions in locations that are comfortable and familiar to the participants (Patton, 2002). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) in qualitative research ensuring a clear, logical rationale in support of the methods requires attention to seven topics:

1. The assumptions of qualitative approaches;
2. The logic for selecting a site, a sample, the participants, or any combination of these;
3. The choice of overall design and data collection methods;
4. And acknowledgment of the intensive aspect of fieldwork;
5. A consideration of ethical issues;
6. The resources needs; and
7. Attention to the trustworthiness of the overall design.

Of principal concern in this study are the socio-cultural factors experienced by 4 African American women who made a career transition specifically from the K-12 to the collegiate environment.

According to Creswell (2003) there are four worldviews that inform qualitative research, they include post positivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory and pragmatism. Social constructivism is often combined with interpretivism. In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. The researcher makes subjective meaning of their experiences and relies on the participants' view of the situation.

In this study I utilize an interpretive lens. According to Creswell (2007) an interpretive lens is used when the researcher wants to address issues influencing marginalized or underrepresented groups. Interpretative positions provide a pervasive lens on all aspects of a qualitative research project. The participants in this interpretive study represent African American women a marginalized group, in the form of gender and race. The research questions explored aim to understanding specific issues and

topics that serve to disadvantage or exclude these women as they transition into a career in the professorate. Creswell (2007), emphasized that the study may explore conditions that include cultures, such as hierarchy, hegemony, racism, sexism, unequal power relations, identity or inequities in our society. For this study, cultures, racism, sexism, unequal power relations and other inequalities of these women are presented.

Creswell (2007) suggest a qualitative study is appropriate when we want to empower individuals to share their stories. The qualitative approach was ideal for this study because it allowed the voices of four African American women to be clearly presented within the context of their career transition. Participants were encouraged to share their individual experiences and stories related to their decision and the transition from a K-12 professional career to the professoriate.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) documented multiple typologies of qualitative research. These have been expanded on by Jacob (1987, 1988), Atkinson, Delamont and Hammersley (1988), Creswell (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005). With its interpretive, descriptive, and exploratory nature, a basic interpretive inquiry is appropriate for the purposes of this research study. Merriam (2009) emphasized that the basic qualitative study is useful in research aimed at capturing “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences (p. 23). Consequently, this approach is essential to capturing interpretations and meanings individuals attribute to experiences that influence their decision to transition into the professorate as well as the challenges and successes of their new careers.

In order to explore and interpret, the professional and personal experiences of these four African American women the broader context of their lives—to include professional experiences, leadership experiences, mentorship, and challenges of the academia—provided the context for data collection and analysis. In other words, there was deliberate attention paid to the previous professional experiences, of the participants to gain insight into their new positions in the academia, particularly because individuals relate experiences through lenses influenced by socio-cultural and historically-derived personal constructs. These were important elements for exploration in this study because of the possible influences they each have on the participants’ decision to establish and maintain successfully careers in the professorate. These constructs provide instructive messages that guide meaning making, behavior, and decision-making.

Within a basic interpretive and descriptive qualitative study, “the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as an instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 6). In other words, the study offers richness and an in-depth understanding of the four African American females interpreted by the researcher. With this in mind, the research explored the ways in which the participants view their life and realities. The research sought to be inductive in its efforts to learn about the four African American women experiences and career transition. I used the details from the participants’ stories to develop a deep understanding of how their experiences influence their decision-making process related to career transition.

In summary, I used an interpretive narrative analysis to interpret the experiences of the participants. Narrative research uses an in depth description of the experiences of specific individuals to provide better analyze and understand the stories lived and told (Creswell 2007, p. 54). The analysis process is discussed in further detail in the analysis section of this chapter.

Research Design

The research design or overall strategy is described below. This section provides an outline of the sampling techniques, data collection methods and analysis procedures used to address the articulated research problem.

Purposeful Sample

The unique experience of each participant is a valued asset in qualitative research. The sampling techniques were equally important for purposes of credibility, richness, and data quality. Participants were selected through a purposeful sampling by a process of snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) as well as criterion-based sampling (Creswell, 1998). Purposeful sampling includes participants who have experienced the phenomenon under consideration and from those whom the researcher can learn the most (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988). The participant sample expanded as others were identified using a snowball method. Some participants identified other individuals of interest that would be key informants (Creswell 2007, p. 127). Patton (1990) asserts information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. (p. 169). Criterion-based sampling involves selecting participants who meet a predetermined set of criteria

of relevance and importance (Creswell, 1998). Merriam (1998) posits that criterion based selection can enhance discovery, understanding, and shed light on issues critical to a study. For the purposes of this study, participants were required to meet the following criteria: (a) must be an African American female (b) have at least one year of experience working in K-12 education settings (c) have experience as a college or university professor and (d) be willing to engage in the interview process and be audio recorded.

Data Collection

Among the various data collection techniques, interviews can be considered the best way to get the information that is wanted (Merriam, 1998). In this study, I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews, and semi-structured interviews.

Patton (2002) lists three approaches to collecting qualitative data through openended interviews: (a) informal conversational interview, (b) general interview guide approach and, (c) standardized open-ended interview. The interview questions began with pre-coded questions, and I allowed other questions to be added as the interviews progressed. While interviews included the participant personal demographics (age, marital status, family origin) and background (educational, marital, socio-economic and employment status), I also gave the participants the opportunity to express themselves further on topics not covered in the interview.

I used open-ended questions to promote in-depth responses to each question from each participant. Although I used an interview guide, the questions were not all asked in the same way and were not often asked in the same order. The interview questions were informed by the overall research questions (Briggs, 1986). In other words, the interview

guide was designed to address the overarching research questions, the purpose of the study, and was informed by the theoretical frameworks and other concepts from the literature. The interview guide in this study consisted of three main categories: 1.) Personal experiences, 2.) Transformational leadership 3.) Qualities of successful professors. The focus of the interviews was to determine how these factors shaped their experiences as university professors.

I also wanted to have interactive dialogue with each participant. The interviews were held in the office or space of choice for each participant, which provide a nonthreatening, familiar, quiet location for conversation. I interviewed each participant at least once with most of the interviews ranging from one and a half to two hours in length. In order to prevent the possibility of postponements, cancellations or schedule conflicts, the interviews were scheduled far in advance.

Once the interviews and the transcripts were complete, I requested a follow up interviews with participants as necessary to clarifying, elaborate on, or verify specific responses. Any clarifying questions from the initial interviews were answered via phone interview. With the recognition of any emergent themes, I asked questions during the follow up interviews that were directly related to newfound themes and trends within the research.

Data sources included audiotaped interviews, field notes, and non-verbal cues observed during the interviews. Each participant was reminded of the confidentiality involved in the study. Each participant was asked to provide further contact information for member checks. Participants were offered a copy of their interview(s) transcripts for

further verification and revision. Prior to conducting any interviews, an IRB form was submitted and each participant was reassured of the plan for confidentiality.

In summary, the data I collected for this study consists of four narrative sets of individual lived experiences. The open-ended nature of questions allowed each participant to focus on specific information about the experiences they felt were most pertinent to their transformational journey into the professoriate. All interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken. All responses were coded for patterns, trends, and correlations to other interviews. The data analysis process is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Data Analysis

There are various definitions of narrative and most definitions allude to the analysis of the story-telling nature of experience. Schwandt (2001) described narrative inquiry as a broad term encompassing the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences and reporting that kind of research. In narrative research, data analysis methods include analyzing data for stories, developing themes and often using chronology (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative analysis, the collection, analysis and report writing are interrelated and are to be done concurrently (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2007).

For the interview data, a thematic analysis was used to analyze the each participant's response to the interview questions. Analyzing the narratives from the interviews showed how participants structure their descriptions to make sense of their stories (Riessman, 1993). During the interviewing process, notes were field notes were

made as the initial analysis process began. As each participant was interviewed, tentative themes, as well as items to follow up on from the first interview and the process continued to the second and subsequent interviews (Merriam, 1998). Each interview was audio recorded. Each audio-recorded interview was transcribed. Transcription is a very important part of the data analysis, particularly for accuracy but also because the transcription process is interpretive (Riessman, 2008). Transcripts themselves have implications for the analysis and interpretation of the research data.

A profile of each participant is included was written as a short narrative describing their history, background, marital status, and other relevant personal information. This information included in the profile helps introduce the reader to the participants, develop a vivid picture of the participant and gives context to their pseudonym. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to guarantee confidentiality.

After the case stories were prepared for each participant, the data from the transcribed interviews were carefully reviewed. Each interview transcript was read several times for clarity. Key words and phrases were color coded with highlighters, each according to for responses from each participant and each question. Tentative themes were identified.

Based on the identified themes, I assigned each theme a representative color, and reviewed each transcript to ensure all matching meaning units were assigned the corresponding color of the appropriate theme. I made notes through the process to use as a data management guide by listing which themes were found through specific interviews.

This process of organizing the data helped facilitate data management particularly for the next step of categorizing.

As the data were being reviewed and manipulated, I underlined key words, concepts and descriptions. From these, other themes and patterns of ideas, concepts, behaviors, interactions, and or language emerged and were noted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sections of seemingly unrelated text from each transcript were placed in a miscellaneous category for later review. The process of sorting and categorizing was repeated, allowing room for subcategories or amendments to the initial organization and for new themes to be assigned. The process was repeated to make sure all the data were accounted for and classified appropriately.

This study utilizes narrative tools to reveal stories representative of the first hand experiences of African American women who have successfully transitioned from a career in K12 administration into the professoriate. Chase (1995) stated: “All forms of narrative share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning (p. 1).” The steps followed for analysis included (1) reading the transcripts, (2) making notes on each transcript, (3) sorting interview questions as they related to the research questions, (4) developing themes, (5) identifying themes across participants, and finally, (6) making the connections across participants.

Data Management

Qualitative research has been called: interpretive, case study, constructivist, and naturalistic. Denzin and Lincoln in Gall and Borg state “that qualitative researchers study

things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 31). Because of the interpretive nature of qualitative research, in the past, it was sometimes difficult to show evidence of data sources. As the researcher and primary research instrument (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993), it was impossible to remain unbiased during the data collection and analysis process. In qualitative research the researcher’s influence on the participant is recognized and appreciated (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Considering the subjective nature of qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the data becomes even more important. Trustworthiness refers to the quality of the investigation that made the research findings significant. The trustworthiness or quality of this research was ensured through triangulation and member checks.

Qualitative researchers have collaborated over the years to create multiple tools and strategies to increase the regularity of trustworthiness when reporting findings in qualitative research. In addition there are four criteria that would define a naturalistic investigation as being noteworthy to audiences would be: (1) credibility/authenticity-the ability of the inquirer to provide assurances of the fit between respondents perceptions of their own life and the way the researcher reconstructs and presents it to the public, (2) transferability-the ability of the researcher’s information to be generalized from one case to another case with similar findings, (3) dependability-the ability of the researcher to ensure a logical, traceable, and documented process for inquiry, and (4) confirmability is the ability of the researcher to link assertions, findings, and interpretations to the actual data to ensure that the information presented was not made up or falsified in any way.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (2000) defined trustworthiness as one criteria for judging the quality or goodness of qualitative inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (2000) described trustworthiness as criteria more appropriate for judging naturalistic investigations than traditional epistemological criteria, such as internal and external validity, and procedures. Lincoln and Guba (2000) give a detailed description of specific strategies for use in establishing trustworthiness during naturalistic methodologies in qualitative research.

This study addressed credibility using strategies such as a peer debriefing, triangulation of data, and member checks. A rich, thick description of the participants and the setting of the study will offer the reader the opportunity to observe shared characteristics of other research and the ability to transfer meaning. The reader will be given such a rich description that he will be able to trust that the judgments made during interpretation are credible.

Credibility

Credibility is likened to internal validity in traditional research inquiries. Strategies most often used to gain credibility include but are not limited to: member checking, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement in the field, video tape and/or audio tape if approved, record non-verbal observations, triangulation of data sources, methods, and investigators (Patton, 1999). Researchers must be persistent in their observations in the field. They must build close relationships with their participants while gaining their

trust. Researchers must learn the cultures of their participants. They must check for any misinterpretations or distortions introduced by the researcher or any informants.

Peer debriefing sessions provide an opportunity for the researcher to answer questions about the methods, meanings, and interpretations of the actual process. It is meant to keep the researcher true to the purpose of the research and not his own purpose. Member checking provides the participants an in depth opportunity to review the findings of the researcher at the end of the study. To maintain credibility, the participants are given the opportunity to judge the accuracy of my account of the events shared and to add anything that is missing or to edit their views of the interpretations given by me as the researcher.

Transferability

Transferability is likened to external validity in traditional research inquiries. The strategy most often used to gain transferability is a thick, rich description. This study will explicitly describe its participants, the study's setting(s), direct quotes from participants about experiences, and specifics about interviews. This rich description of the research process and findings should give the reader enough information to make a decision about whether or not the findings share any characteristics with other situations (Creswell, 2007).

Lincoln & Guba (2000) stated that the naturalistic cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is parallel to reliability in traditional research processes.

Confirmability is parallel to objectivity in traditional research processes. Strategies used to gain dependability and confirmability may include: external auditing and documentation of detailed field notes, quality recordings and transcriptions. An audit would allow someone not connected to the research to examine the process and the product and to give their assessment of the study. These records could also be confirmed by making them readily available for review by an inquirer.

Creswell (2007) states that triangulating and writing thick descriptions may be the easiest and most cost effective strategies to use, but recommends at least two of these strategies should always be employed when performing qualitative research.

To further establish trustworthiness and credibility in this study, I will provide a detailed, rich, and vivid description of the participants and assessable transcripts. The interviews were to audiotape, with permission, as well as detailed notes during the interview. Member checks were to clarify the researchers' interpretations of the participant's perspectives.

Member Checks

Member checks or respondent validation (Schwandt, 2007) is essential for credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and for internal validity (Merriam, 2009). In the process of member checking, the participants were asked to comment on my interpretation of the data to ensure accuracy of interpretation and trustworthiness of data. These checks were throughout the course of the study. It was practical to conduct

member checks by telephone as all of the participants were not in my local area. Lincoln and Guba (2000) describe the role of a peer de-briefer as an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations, and provides a sympathetic listening ear for the researchers' ideas and concerns.

Another process used to increase credibility was member checking. Member checking allows the participants, to review the researchers' findings, categories, and interpretations (Patton, 1999). The participants had the opportunity to reflect on the accuracy of the preliminary account of the data.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research the role of the researcher is important in methodological design, data collection and analysis. Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts and Whatmore (1999) suggest that the questions asked, how they are framed, theories utilized and data interpretations are all subject to the social and cultural positions of the researcher. This has become known as the researcher's positionality. My positionality and perspectives in this process are very important in this qualitative process (Morgan, 2007). Mills (1959) asserts everything depends on the lenses through which we view the world and new lenses allow the unseen to become visible.

The researcher in qualitative research is the instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). This influences all decisions and impedes any chances of an unbiased process (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). My research questions, methods and theories were influenced by my personal values, assumptions and experience

as an African American woman in a K12 leadership position with future aspirations for a career in the professoriate.

Summary

This was a qualitative research study that examined the perceptions of four African American women and interpretations of their journey from K12 administrators to professors in higher education. Additionally, the study sheds light on the challenges of career transition for African American women, leadership and the importance of mentoring for women in the professorate. In order to understand the way the participants made meaning of their experiences during career transition, the primary source of data collection was through audio-recorded open-ended interviews.

I looked for corroboration as well as contradictions and documented them accordingly in the next chapter, chapter four. In analyzing the interview data, a thematic analysis was conducted where the interviews were coded according to patterns and emergent themes. The constructed meanings of the relationship between the participants lived experiences, stories and the way they perceive their career is presented utilizing an interpretive lenses. This, in conjunction with the personal profiles I created, allowed me to share an inclusive story of their combined experiences. Convergent and divergent experiences are shared in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings based on the analysis of the interviews conducted with the participants in this study. It presents the voices of four African American women who have successfully transitioned from K-12 administrative roles to the professoriate. The actual words of the participants are included and represent their stories. The following research questions guided this study: (a) How do African American women describe their leadership characteristics as urban K-12 administrators as they transitioned into careers in the professoriate? (b) How do African American women describe their experiences related to their transition from administrative careers in K-12 settings into the professoriate? and, (c) How do African American women describe their experiences as it relates to their new roles in the professoriate?

This chapter is organized into three main sections. Each section concludes with a summary. The first section presents a profile of each participant. This profile includes a graphic presentation of the four African American women who transitioned from K-12 leadership roles to the professoriate. In this section, I present a graphic representation of the participant's demographic backgrounds and career experiences/background. Pseudonyms are used that are based on characteristics of the participants. (See Table 1.A). The second section of the chapter includes the emergent themes that address the four research questions. In this section, the actual words, using direct quotes, from the participants provide thick, rich descriptions of what emerged from the participants'

interviews. This section also includes how I as the researcher make meaning or interpret their stories. In this section, I will also refer back to the literature in Chapters I and II and note whether the findings support or contradict the reviewed literature.

Several themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews. They are organized accordingly. The major themes for research question 1 included: (a) visionary (b) hardworking (c) impactful (d) confident and (e) resilient. The themes for research question 2 were (a) personal experiences and (b) professional experiences. In terms of personal experiences two sub-themes emerged. They were (a) supportive personal relationships and (b) making sacrifices. The theme of professional experiences also had two sub-themes (a) landing the job (b) professional relationships/mentors and (c) dealing with doubters. The themes for research question 3 were (a) new roles; new responsibilities (b) The 'isms' rear their ugly heads (c) I'm a Superwoman and (d) feeling the weight of the world on our shoulders.

These findings are all illustrated in (See Table 1.B). The third and final section of this chapter presents a summary of the study's overall findings as they specifically relate to the major research questions and the literature, thereby providing a springboard for a fulsome discussion of implications in the next chapter, chapter five.

Participant Profiles

This section presents an overall descriptive profile of the participants; its purpose is to provide information on their backgrounds in order to provide the reader with insight into the participants, as well as to provide a context for their personal experiences. These profiles cover demographic information and family history as well as offer a snapshot of

their professional experiences. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym that she is referred to in the profile and throughout the study. The participant profiles are listed in with no specific significance to that order. The profiles of the participants (pseudonyms): Dr. Business First; Dr. New Plans; Dr. Been There Done That; and Dr. On My Own Terms. Table 4.1 summarizes the demographics of the participants (also presented in no particular order).

Participant 1: Dr. Business First

Dr. Business First (BF) is the mother of one daughter. She is divorced. Dr. Business First believes that a strong support system is important during your advanced degree period as well as when you are transitioning into a new position. She shares the story of one of her friends while in medical school, her parents moved around with her to provide family support for her daughter. She does not indicate she had this type of support. In spite of not having that kind of support, she attributes her faith to what keeps her going. She emphasizes “another piece of it that helps me on a day to day basis is my faith. I have a faith in a higher power.” She adds, “that's a source of great strength for me, my faith and spirituality.”

Dr. Business First is the third generation of educators in her family. Her aunts and great aunts were educators. She recounts, “historically, you know, education was one of the few professions for educated Blacks.” She specifies this was especially true if you are from the Deep South. She was initially an education major in college. She changed her major to education with the recommendation of her advisor. She always knew she would get her doctorate. She loved learning, reading, and research. She was

certified to teach in three states. She has been an elementary teacher, assistant principal, and teaching assistant. She looks at her years of working on her doctorate as a time of phenomenal intellectual growth. During this period, she was fortunate to work with world-renowned scholars.

Dr. BF has been in education 24 years. She was an elementary school teacher in the Northern United States and she worked as a middle school teacher in the Southern United States. She has been an assistant principal intern. She held that position during the time she completed her doctorate degree. She has worked at both predominantly White Institutions and historically Black colleges and universities. Her first position in higher education was in a staff position as an academic advisor and special program director. She is currently an associate professor at an HBCU in the Southern United States.

Because she conveyed a typical “type A” personality, I assigned her the pseudonym Dr. Business First (BF). Dr. BF was very straightforward with her responses. She did not hold back on many examples. Each time I asked the initial questions from the protocol, her responses led to multiple opportunities for additional questions. She was open to share information about her personal life and her professional experiences in great detail.

Participant 2: Dr. New Plans

Dr. New Plans (NP) always had the support of her family. Her parents and grandparents were constantly supportive of her academic and professional endeavors. She is single with no children of her own. As a young girl, Dr. New Plans loved to write.

She boasted that she has journals from when she was in the first grade. As long as she can remember she enjoyed writing. There were two teachers who recognized her love for writing and encouraged her to continue writing.

Dr. New Plans had aspirations for attending law school after completing her undergraduate degree in Human Resources and Spanish. She decided to give Teach for America a try while she was making her decision about law school and during that time, she fell in love with teaching. She spent six years as a first grade teacher, one year as a literary specialist, and four years in administration as the Director of college counseling. All of her K-12 experiences were in urban schools.

After starting graduate school, she became interested in crafting a career where she could make an impact on a larger scale, by teaching at the university level. When she completed her doctoral degree, she continued in her position as a college counselor. She was soon offered an opportunity to relocate to another state with the possibility of a postdoctoral position. Reluctant to resign and accept a position with no financial certainty, her father encouraged her and reminded her “sometimes in life you have to get pulled back so that you can catapult further into your destiny than you ever could if you were just walking normal”. She accepted the post doc and attributes the experience to what prepared her for her current position as an assistant professor. Dr. New Plans is under 40 years of age with almost 20 years of experience in education. She is now an assistant professor at a private predominately White institution in the northeastern region of the United States. She teaches graduate courses, continues to publish, and she supports students of color by serving as the advisor of the Black student graduate

association. Because of her openness to and excitement for new opportunities for herself, I assigned her the pseudonym Dr. New Plans (Dr. N P).

Participant 3: Dr. Been There Done That

Dr. Been There Done That (BTDT) is a wife and mother of three. She planned her doctoral program around her children's early school years. Her husband, children, and family were extremely supportive of her as she pursued her career goals. She reflects on the sacrifices they all made, and is certain that it was worth it. She is from a family of educators. Her mother loved teaching and was also an educator. She holds dear the advice her mother offered as she entered the profession "treat all children the way you would want your children to be treated" and "no matter what you are going through in your life personally, you leave it at the door when you walk in; because no one deserves to be treated unfairly or the way they should be because of your personal problems".

Dr. BTDT fell in love with teaching in the 7th grade when she was selected to tutor younger students. Her dreams of being a dancer took second place behind her desire to teach. She landed her first teaching job in a new school. She almost declined the position when she discovered there were no other faculty members that "looked like" her. She loved her first years of teaching and could not believe they paid her to do something she enjoyed so much. She soon decided she would pursue a Masters in Administration. She has been an administrator in a large urban district working with alternatively certified teachers and a department chair. During her doctoral program, she received a fellowship and became a full time graduate student. Dr. Been There Done

That has 33 years of experience in education. She has been an adjunct, a visiting professor, and currently holds a tenure track position. She has taught at private, proprietary, and state universities. Her experiences includes both predominantly White and historically Black institutions. This participant was very proud of each of her work experiences and she was not regretful about expressing her self-pride. Because she frequently expressed her years of experience and her broad repertoire of experiences, I gave her the pseudonym Dr. Been There Done That.

Participant 4: Dr. On My Own Terms

Dr. On My Own Terms has been an educator for 30 years. She explains that she teachers because she likes it and she “wouldn’t know how to do anything else”. She is from a family of educators. She admired one of her cousins and considered her one of the greatest educators. Dr. On My Own Terms did not aspire to be a teacher when she entered college. She dreamed of being a foreign language interpreter. So she was a Spanish major French minor, then Spanish major German minor, then Spanish major dance minor. She was as she put it, “all over the place.” She recounts the conversation with her mother when she informed her that she would now pay for her school and instructed her “by the way, I’m gonna need you to go down to the substitute office at the school board and get on that substitute list”. Her initial response was “really”? As a young girl, she attended a predominantly White Catholic School. Aspiring to be a teacher was the furthest thing from her mind. She remembers thinking, “anything but a teacher”. She followed her Mom’s advice completed the application and loved working as a substitute teacher. She realized she discovered her passion, enrolled in a university

near her home and completed her degree. She believes her parents always saw the teacher in her.

Dr. On My Own Terms is a single woman with very close family ties. She is very close to her parents and considers making them proud her greatest accomplishment. She is from a small city where her neighbors and church members count on her to mentor the students that attend the university where she is faculty. She takes pride in being able to serve her community in that manner. She has a passion for helping African American students. She cites her own brother as being a student who fell through the cracks in the educational system. Having moved away from home, she is a fervent believer in taking risk and moving beyond your comfort zone to advance your career and your life.

She has been a bilingual elementary school teacher, a bilingual summer program assistant principal, an elementary assistant principal, district administrator for bilingual education, an assistant professor at an HBCU in the southern region and is now an associate professor at another HBCU in a southern state. During her responses, I noticed she consistently reminded me of her various examples of risk-taking. She implied that while she takes advice from others and considers her family when making decisions, she stands alone in all of her final choices, which is why I gave her the pseudonym Dr. On My Own Terms (OMOT).

Research Question 1 Analysis

How do African American women describe their leadership characteristics as urban K-12 administrators to a career in the professoriate?

These four women were clear in their articulations of the characteristics they possessed and knew were important for other African American women making the transition from being urban K-12 administrators to successful careers in higher education. Five themes emerged as they each responded to questions that addressed what they viewed as their leadership characteristics.

The themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews which describe the leadership characteristics included being: (a) visionary (b) hardworking (c) impactful (d) confident and (e) resilient. Having a deep faith or spiritual connection was a characteristic worthy of noting because although it did not emerge as a major theme two of the three participants indicated faith and spirituality as critical to their lives.

Visionary

A visionary is a person with ideas about the future. They think and plan for the future with expectation. The women in this study each spoke of their childhood dreams and desires. They each mentioned having plans and the desire to reach their goals. This characteristic of being a visionary leader is particularly significant because it is aligned with expectations. These former K-12 school leaders intuitively had a characteristic critical to urban education. They each held visions for themselves with high expectations, and a strong sense of self-efficacy. In urban education, teacher holding high expectation for their students and a strong sense of efficacy is essential. This characteristic was spoken of with enthusiasm, as each participant remained optimistic about goals yet achieved. Dr. New Plan used the word vision over a dozen times in various stages of the interview. When asked about successful leadership she responded,

“I would say having a vision of what you want your impact to be and then backwards planning from that and what I mean by that is just, you know, I knew that I wanted to have a job that impacted my community, impacted other people. I knew I didn’t wanna just be sitting at a desk

somewhere, you know, or making up programs, or whatever, um, so for me it was just having a vision of having a life that had meaning and then from there that backwards planning.”

She continues on to say, “it’s hard, the days I’m crying, whatever’s happening that I don’t like, I’m still committed to my vision of being an impactful leader in education” She completed this thought by repeating her sentiments about vision. “You have a vision, commit to the vision and then execute the vision, daily, weekly, you know, in your life.” The other participants interchanged the word goals and vision but they too believed vision and high expectation were important. Dr. Been There Done That adds,

“I think as an educational leader, you have to have your own personal goals, you can’t blame anybody. If it’s a certain position that you want, you just have to really really, really, um, really be diligent about what you want to do. You have to believe in yourself, you have to say ‘this is what I want’ and stay positive and do an excellent job, do your best, go far and beyond, um, what’s required.”

Dr. Business First admits that her drive has challenged her to continue progressing in her career and her vision of what is next propels her to the next challenge.

“I've always been very driven about going to the next level. I knew I was gonna get my doctorate when I was an undergrad, I knew that. Cause I've always had goals and I've always thought about "how can I go to the next level?" So now that I've accomplished...the DOC. I've been a professor, right now I'm focused on what can I go to next.”

As administrators in K-12 urban education, these four women had the responsibility leading students, teachers, programs, and schools. They were able to accomplish many of their successes because of their vision. Their visions included success.

A thoughtful analysis of this theme shows corroboration with the theme with what the research suggests. In reference to visioning and in describing leadership characteristics, women are likely to critically examine the past, ask the difficult questions, promote collective visioning, focus on the development of others, and respond with the good of the community at heart (Irwin, 1995). Researchers have identified other characteristics that describe how women function in leadership roles.

Gillett-Karam (1994) used four behaviors to characterize women in leadership. These behaviors included (a) vision behavior-women leaders take appropriate risks to bring about change; (b) people behavior-meaning women leaders provide care and respect for individual differences; (c) influence behavior because women act collaboratively, and (d) values behavior in which women leaders spend time building trust and openness. The theme of being a visionary is echoed in the literature and shows the significant role that it plays in the success of these women and with the hope of carving out possibilities for other African American women in the future.

Hard Working

Like many other jobs, hard work is a basic criterion. The hard work these women describe is akin to their dedication. These women were accustomed to putting in extended hours and doing what was necessary. They each held positions as administrators in urban schools where the circumstances can be challenging requiring a committed dedication to their students, faculty and schools. They expressed their individual ideas of how important the willingness to work hard was in achieving not only transitioning but also in being successful in the academy. Their expressions of the importance of hard work are represented in the following quotes. Throughout her interview, Dr. New Plans reiterated that working hard was needed to be successful. Her responses to various questions included these statements, “you don’t have to be the most intelligent, or have the biggest, grandest ideas but just be a committed hard worker.” Then, “so, I think another act of success is, committing to the hard work it's gonna take to get there. So, it's hard work being a professor or an educational leader,” In one of her final statements of the interview, she concluded with, “I would definitely say, phew, man, hard work, I mean I can be really cliché', but, it's a lot of work, a lot of sacrifice”.

The other participants included being a hard worker as a characteristic for being an educational leader. Dr. Business First knew that others observed this characteristic in her actions “she saw that I was a hard worker-that I was able to get the job done, respond fast.” She adds:

“I think part of for me what has always worked for me is having a work

ethic. Understanding that you know sometimes I'm going to have to apply more energy, more time umm to a particular project to make it be successful. And so in higher education, or even in K12, in terms of K12 positions you know to be successful, you know you have to manage your own time. And you have to be able to set goals and you have to understand those incremental steps to get their larger goals, but that does require a work ethic. So for me the efficacy is just tied into my desire to accomplish goals.”

Dr. On My Own Terms might have expressed it best when she said teaching was not for the faint of heart, never boring. This characteristic of being a hard worker was demonstrated in the many roles and responsibilities these participants described in their roles as professors. This is further elaborated on in greater detail in response to research question 3.

Unfortunately, even in contemporary society, African Americans are still burdened by historical legacies of discrimination and systematic oppression. Evidence of this can be seen throughout the entire educational spectrum from K-12 to higher education. Harvey (2011) argues, higher education institutions have been complicit in segregation and other systems of exclusion and because of the ivory tower posture, have not taken responsibility nor have they engaged in social problems, especially not racial segregation, but rather have reinforced institutionalized racism. Through this lens, it is argued in the literature that faculty of color are often burdened with having to work harder than their male and or White counterparts. For example, underrepresented faculty members are charged with providing support to students beyond their optimal student

advising loads, which places an increased burden on faculty ability to meet the performance requirements imposed by their institutions (Boyd et al., 2010; Zambrano, 2016). These over loads on faculty of color are referred to as cultural taxation.

Impactful

Dr. New Plans loved her job as a K-12 school administrator. She had progressed from an undergraduate student to a first grade teacher through the Teach for America organization. Her initial intentions were to teach while she made a decision on law school or investigated other career options. After only a short time of teaching first grade, she fell in love with teaching. She found teaching to be “rewarding”. She continued her education and received a master of education. She felt her impact in the classroom was big but graduate school afforded her a broader lens. She began to see the potential of impacting students through teachers. She states,

“I always felt like my impact with in my classroom was really big. Um, but then as I went to grad school and started to see that I could potentially craft a career for myself where I could, um, have an impact on a larger scale in classrooms that I may not even be personally be in but that could be touched by the teachers that I have taught, um at the university level.”

Dr. New Plans explained that she had a “desire to have a career that’s meaningful in my life as well as in other people’s lives, determining what has to be done to have that,” Dr. Business first made a similar comment when she stated that she wanted to “combine my desire to do research and to work with people to hopefully make some type of impact on my students and the profession”.

In some way each of the participants found it important to impact the lives of students in a positive manner. Dr. On My Own Terms expressed her personal story regarding her brother. She explained that he was one of those students who “fell through the cracks’ All of the participants expressed wanting to help new teachers to meet the needs of the students they would be serving. She was also interested in dispelling myths and stereotypes by helping more teachers of color pass the exams and enter the classrooms.

Teaching has been described through the ages as a calling. One study examined the effects of background variables and professional role orientation on teaching commitment in 478 teacher education undergraduates (72% female, 10% minority). A factor analysis of motives, values, and attitudes toward teaching showed the presence of underlying orientations: a sense of calling, a service ethic, and a belief in the legitimacy of teachers' responsibilities. (Serow, Eaker, & Ciechalski, 1992). This theme of being impactful is also directly related to the previous theme of being hard working or in other words makes reference to what Brookfield (1995) describes as the way in which teachers refer to their work as a vocation. More specifically he suggests,

...teaching is a calling distinguished by selfless service to students and educational institutions. That teachers sometimes eagerly accept concepts of vocation and conscientiousness to justify their taking on backbreaking loads is evident from Campbell and Neill's (1994a, b) studies of teachers' work. A sense of calling becomes distorted to mean that they should deal with larger and larger numbers of students, regularly teach overload courses, serve on search, alumni and library committees, generate external

funding by winning grant monies, and make occasional forays into scholarly publishing. And they should do all of this without complaining, which is the same as whining (pp. 15-16).

The theme impactful emerged from the participants who show that their work is more than a job but a calling and one in which they work very hard to make a positive difference in other people's lives.

Confident

Although these women demonstrated great humility when discussing their personal success, they each pointed to being confident as a key characteristic in their careers as education leaders, in their transitions to higher education as in their positions in the professorate. Confidence is being sure of yourself. It is a wiliness to take a chance based on your own judgment. Knowing that you are capable of making good decisions. Leadership in any capacity requires confidence that will inspire others to follow you. In their K-12 administrative roles, these women demonstrated their confidence in their various professional roles. They also demonstrated confidence as they made their career decisions to leave their jobs in K-12 and move to the professorate.

The following quotes are reflective of their confidence as they made their transition to a new career. Dr. Business First explains:

“Now when I graduated from my program I really could have gone anywhere in the world. You know and I chose to go back you know to my home state, but you know my degree my alma mater had an excellent preparation for my area of study that always ranked in the top 3 in the nation you know each year.”

Dr. New Plan's fathers' inspiration was what she needed to remind her that she could do well in her career. His example was of being catapulted back in order to go forward. She was willing to take a position because she was confident in her ability to do well. This confidence was also demonstrated when she excelled after she accepted a position as High School counselor with no experience. Dr. Been There Done That made the analogy of a tree being pruned when you move from one position to another. She asserts,

“When I left, it's just professionally I grew, it was just like, ooh, it's almost like, you know, if you're pruning when you cut something because it hurts sometimes to disconnect but I think, it may hurt for that moment, but um, professionally where it will take you it's just not, not having any fear, believing that, yes I can do this, I can step into this position and do this, yes. Because one thing about it, is to be open to learning, um and just do your best and I think it just, you'll just will be amazed, you will be amazed where you will go.”

The women in this study all encountered professional situations that required them to call stand confidently in their decisions and abilities. Dr. On My Own Terms, after working in higher education had to relocate back to her home state because of a serious health condition. She accepted a position in K-12 and discovered she was not full filled. She recounts;

“I was miserable. I felt very uh unchallenged. I knew I wasn't living up to my potential. And it's not saying you know I had a position that was pseudo administration. My principal loved me. By December he said 'look if you want

to go interview at an elementary school I have a friend who needs an elementary assistant principal. You need to be back in administration.’ And I told him no, I said that’s not where I’m going back to. I said if anywhere, I’m going back into higher Ed. He said let me know if you change your mind. Because you would be excellent in campus administration. We need you. When I got the job at my present institution, he was real upset.”

Dr. Been There Done That had a unique experience when she was challenged to change her course of study because her district would not support her pursuing a graduate degree in administration. She sought union counsel and determined it was in her best interest to not go against the district but pursue her interest in administration. She recalls this powerful, moving situation.

“It was really an eye opener and it really wasn’t good for a new teacher but then it was good in another way, because from that point on, it was so bad and so upsetting and so unfair and wrong. And I’m like this is 1980, this I the 80’s not the 50’s and I kept thinking you know or even the 60’s. But I mean this I happening in the 80’s, almost the 9, you know, and, I, I’m glad it happened to me because I just looked at everything professionally different from that point. But it also got me to look at myself like you know what, what I want, I’m going after it and you know, and I stayed there for a while, my husband kept telling me to leave, to leave and I kept, no it’s unfair, but then when I left I have just grown so much. I have learned so much and I have developed so many more relationships.

And professionally, it was just, I'm glad it happened and then I guess I'm glad it happened because I can share it with, (sighs) women like you.”

These women also found that a great deal of confidence was required after they obtained their new positions in higher education. They found this male dominated field of higher education disinterred an even greater level of confidence. Dr. New Plans goes as far as stating, “you have to have confidence in yourself, because this is the type of position that can really tear you down, um, can really make you question your intelligence, question what you know, what you do” She adds later in the interview,

“It goes back to what I said a little bit earlier about knowing yourself and then having confidence in yourself and being resilient, um, despite and in spite of challenges, in spite of competition between you know amongst colleagues or whatever it may be, like to be focused, to have a laser beam focus on why you're there, what your vision is and you know, what your purpose is and don't let anyone take that away from you.”

The belief in one’s ability to successfully perform or accomplish a given task can support the process of high career achievement. Self-efficacy allows people to believe in their capability to perform a task, specifically their capacity to mobilize cognitive and other resources required to execute a course of action successfully (Baldwin, 2006). A successful administrator [professor] “is committed, independent, dominant, active, adventurous, sensitive, secure, and self-confident” (Harvard, 1986, p.19) and needs to have the personal self-belief that they can be successful.

According to Carter & Parker (1996), African American women school leaders are described as courageous while displaying strength and resilience as they face both racism and sexism in their efforts to succeed. In essence, courage and confidence is an important characteristic when facing major challenges. Career Transitions Inventory (CTI) is a 40-item multidimensional measure of career change adjustment, which was designed to measure perceptions of psychological resources operating when adults pursue a career transition. Items for the instrument were developed on theoretical grounds. The initial sample in the development and validation of the instrument consisted of 300 adults who were in career transition. A principle components factor analysis followed by a varimax rotation revealed five factors: (a) readiness, (b) confidence, (c) perceived support, (d) control, and (e) decision independence. This inventory shows that one of the five factors, confidence, is in direct alignment with the data presented by the participants in the study.

Resilient

It is significant that the final characteristic presented is, resilient. There are countless studies that support the importance of resiliency of urban students. In urban faculty professional development materials often include sessions and information instructing teachers to recognize the resiliency of urban youth. A resiliency model focuses on student strengths as opposed to a deficit model where children their families and cultures are viewed as problematic. In a resiliency model their characteristics are viewed as strengths. While these former urban educational leaders may have been in position to lead the charge in terms of viewing their student's characteristics as

strengths, they also demonstrated characteristics of resilience. Werner, (1993) found six characteristics that emerged from adults who became successful in spite of their adverse circumstances and defined these adults as resilient. These characteristics include: has extraordinary responsibilities, has special interest, skills and talents, seeks support, has intrinsic faith, has a sense of humor, and is persistent.

Resiliency emerged as a personal characteristic of these women. This predominantly White, predominantly male career in the professorate requires not only thick skin but also resiliency. Dr. New Plans admits, “you gotta have that bounce back factor.” She cites examples such as times when she has spent countless hours working on a manuscript only to have it rejected by an editor. It is her resiliency that allows her to accept the rejection, edit the manuscript and resubmit it to another journal. It is that same resilience that refuses to take the evaluations of students too personally when she knows she has done everything possible to accommodate students who in the end may submit negative evaluations.

The other participants described situations that are demonstrations of resiliency. Dr. On My Own Terms battled through a personal health crisis and the unforeseen divorce of her parents and continued to perform well, to publish and excel in her career.

Dr. Been There Done That acknowledges that she may have been naive as a young woman in her twenties when she first entered the profession but some difficult situations made her a better professional. Dr. Business First admits that her faith is what keeps her focused. Each participant sought support in numerous situations. They were

undoubtedly persistent. The following are quotes that exemplify resilience, making resilient a strong characteristic of these participants.

- Extraordinary Responsibility – Dr. Business First

“And just people having expectations about what women should do. Women get saddled with a lot of committee work, the administrative work. You may not always get compensated for it. You know the expectations for women to perform in higher education are much more umm just detailed than what men have to do.”

- Special Interest – Dr. On My Own Terms

“I’m renovating a house in Galveston. I’m renovating another house to rent in Galveston. So I’m doing all of it.”

- Seeks Support – Dr. Been There Done That

“So, it was some things you have to give up and you know some things you just can’t get back. But it’s something that you sit down and you explain to everyone: you know this is my goal, if you can support me.”

- Intrinsic Faith – Dr. New Plans

“I would definitely say that that’s important that you have confidence, wherever it comes from, it comes from your faith in God, comes from, you know, if it’s just innate within you but you have to have, be confident with what you’re doing.”

- Sense of Humor – Dr. On My Own Terms

“I don’t know how to do anything else but teach...I, I, I truly don’t...I cannot see myself being a nurse or anything to do with blood and guts.

I couldn't see myself being an attorney. Umm I feel that that's probably stress related stressful. Umm I couldn't see myself on my feet all day serving or being a greeter at Walmart because my knees hurt too bad and I'd get tired and bored."

- Persistent – Dr. Business First

"I remember she wanted me to work on a handbook. And so um she had given me some passages to put in the handbook. She said I want you to take this paragraph from this book and you put this in our handbook. And so I followed APA format. I did either block indent quote, the year, quotation marks, I included all of that. She asked me to remove the quotation page number and put it in the book as if we had written that. And I remember just being shocked and outraged about that that you're asking me-I said well we're supposed to cite and the comment was: 'We bought enough copies of this book to be able to take and copy from this book. I've already paid for enough copies'. And I thought to myself, I'm not doing that! I'm not!"

These quotes represent a small portion of the many acts that demonstrate the characteristic of resiliency.

The theme of resilience shows an interlocking relationship with the confidence theme discussed previously in this chapter. As indicated by Carter and Parker (1996) African American women school leaders are described as courageous while displaying strength and resilience as they face both racism and sexism in their efforts to succeed. Resilience is sometimes described as "the glue that keeps us functioning when we are confronted with life's misfortunes or challenges (Joseph, 1994, p. 25)." Stevens (2002) defined resilience as moral steadfast perseverance, demonstrated by hardiness and

courage in the face of dangerous and hazardous conditions. Resilience is basically the ability to “bounce back” (Joseph, 1994). The literature described here show the corroboration with the experiences described in terms of resilience of the African American women who participated in the study.

Research Question 2 Analysis

How do African American women describe their experiences related to their transition from administrative careers in K-12 settings into the professoriate?

As these women responded to questions related to their experiences as they transitioned into the professorate, two major themes emerged. They shared experiences that were both personal and professional. The two emergent themes were therefore: (a) personal experiences and (b) professional experiences. In terms of personal experiences two sub-themes emerged. They were (a) supportive personal relationships and (b) making sacrifices. The theme of professional experiences also had two sub-themes (a) landing the job and (b) professional relationships/mentors. These themes and sub-themes are supported with the following direct quotes.

Personal Experiences

For the purpose of this study, I categorized personal experiences as those related to (a) supportive personal relationships and (c) making sacrifices. These topics emerged as subthemes.

Supportive Personal Relationships

Relationships took on different meaning for each of the participants. They each mentioned different people who were important to them in their careers and as they

made their career transitions. According to Dr. New Plans establishing and maintaining personal relationships with people helped to keep her “centered”. She indicated these relationships are personally beneficial to her by adding, “I think having people who are in no way connected to academia, is the support system that I need and that really helps me stay grounded.”

Dr. New Plans was always supported by her family and close friends her in her career goals. What seems to have been a very personal and significant point was when her father encouraged her to join her former committee member when he left the state for another university. With no guarantee of funding, he encouraged her by saying reminding her “sometimes in life you have to get pulled back so that you can catapult further into your destiny than you ever could if you were just walking normal”. Through the relationships with both family and friends, Dr. New Plans acknowledges that a balance is obtained. She explains that

“I think that, there definitely needs to be personal and professional relationships and that they don't necessarily need to be mutually exclusive, like I think for sure, personal relationships from a family, from my boyfriend, just people who are in my life that are the ones that keep me centered and help me have great balance, so because definitely with this type of job, it's the type of job where you feel like the work is never done.”

Dr. Been There Done That adds,

“My mother who helped me a great deal. And my husband was very supportive. But helped me with my kids, so, they went to different things. Um maybe different programs at school.”

Making Sacrifices

All of the women were open to the discussion regarding the sacrifices they had made. Some of them related to their families, their personal time, and even their health. Dr. Business First shares how the responsibilities of the job and sacrifices she has made have impacted her in the following statements.

“Overworking...that once you're really good at something, or because you're a woman or whatever; because they know you get results, people tend to dump a lot of work off on you. You may not receive any benefits from it, you may not get anything out of it. Your evaluation will be the same as other people, but people would pass a lot of work onto you. Overworking uhm...you know, It's impacted health. And then the time towards my uhm...you know, home life.”

She adds that in terms of her daughter,

“My sacrifice would be um my child-I had a -you know my child was a baby at the time I entered the professoriate. So you know I have deep regrets about the time of working and just in the-where we were. The poor quality of the uh early childhood education there-that's something I really feel bad about. Just the time working and just not having a lot of I guess help with my daughter in terms of just being able to do more for her. I regret the time it took that I could have applied to her-that would be a sacrifice.”

Other participants in the study have similar scenarios. Dr. Been There Done That adds,

“So, you do have to miss some things. It did help that I was married, but I had a lot of support also from my mother. So, it was some things you have to give up and you know some things you just can’t get back. I mean it wasn’t uncommon for me to come home and just be tired. And come home to my kids and then say ok follow me to my bedroom because I’m going to get in bed and we can talk about your day and what happened in school all three of them. That was just the norm for us. If I was really really tired.”

There were also sacrifices made in terms of relocating. Dr. Business First considers it a part of what is necessary when seeking a position in higher education. She states, “So to me the biggest obstacle now is people actually trying to get a position in higher ed that are coming from k12 Are you willing to move? Are you willing to travel?” In her own experience as well as two of the other participants, relocation became a part of their academic and career advancement. Dr. On My Own Terms made a very big decision to move out of the state for her first position in higher education. She recounts the experience.

“So then the opportunity came up...the dean of the College of Education of XXX was interviewing...and I actually thought to be honest and this is crazy...I actually thought that she was interviewing and I was sitting on a panel. It didn't click to me that-you're being interviewed for a job and I was like oh no wait a

minute. So when I realized that I was like oh okay that'd be cool...that those are my pivotal moments.”

She adds, “so for me to take that step and move six driving hours away...that was huge.” There were financial sacrifices as well. These women were willing to make financial sacrifices to pursue their educational and career goals. For Dr. New Plans, she determined she would accept the position as a postdoc prior to knowing the finances would be secured. Dr. Business First moved from one region of the country to another and back again for financial reasons. She left her position in administration to work as a teaching assistant. She adds,

“The professors wanted to hire me to do...student teaching supervision. And they wanted me to do...TAs, so I left the assistant principalship position and decided to go to higher ed cause they made those offers and the particular professors who were over the...that program were just really nationally known, Ken Zeickner and Karl Grant.”

She had finished her doctoral studies and made the decision that a move back to her home state would be the best financial decision she could make in terms of investing in her retirement. She explained that as a teaching assistant, she was not investing in her retirement.

“[I would] work full time and go back into the district where I was already established in another state's retirement system; because, you know, the working, the part time, the working at the university level - you're not in a retirement system, you're not getting any benefits. I thought it was good to go back to the

state where I had been working and go back into the retirement system and work fill to full time and work on the dissertation.”

Dr. Been There Done That left her full time position in K-12 to pursue her educational goal. It was this decision that lead to her receiving a fellowship and her first experience in higher education.

Professional Experiences

For the purpose of this study, I categorized professional experiences as those related to (a) how these participants acquired their first job, (b) professional relationships/mentors and (c) how they dealt with doubters. These emerged as subthemes.

Landing the Job

Each of these four women had different points of entry into their roles as professors. They each had such interesting stories of how they were promoted from one job to the next throughout their careers. It is significant to note how different people recognized their leadership and were supportive in recommending them, hiring them or promoting them. I add their personal career path stories here to add context to the significance of their professional relationships, the following theme.

Dr. New Plans' Career Story

Dr. New Plans was on an upward track in her career in the K-12 setting. She had moved from a first grade teacher to a literary specialist and was quite content. She credits the experience she had in seeking participants for her dissertation study with landing her job in K-12 administration. The contact she made to give her information on

possible participants, encouraged her to apply for the position. She remembers thinking, “like dude I've taught first grade and I've been a literacy specialist, I don't know anything about counseling kids, I don't know anything about high school kids”. She was hired for the position.

When describing her doctoral experience she says, “I wasn't a full time graduate student, I wasn't engrossed in research, I didn't publish ..., if I had tried to go straight well number one I don't even know if I would have gotten a job because I didn't have any publications outside of my dissertation.” Because she maintained her full time position in K-12 while pursuing her doctoral degree, she was not able to fully engage in the academic activities that would prepare one for a position in the professorate. Prior to receiving her doctorate, she had not completed any research, published any manuscripts or presented at any conferences. All these elements are what committees are seeking when hiring new faculty.

For Dr. New Plans, perhaps the catalyst for actually making the leap into higher was a former committee member who invited her to join him after taking a position at another university. Her post doc gave her the time to add the required research and presentations to her vita. Prior to the post doc she was not prepared for navigating and negotiating in the world of higher education. Upon completing her postdoc she was adequately prepared to compete with applicants who were immersed in their doctoral programs. She attributes this two-year experience with preparing her for her position as a tenure track assistant professor. She found this experience as a postdoc vital to her acquiring a position.

Dr. Been There Done That's Career Story

Dr. Been There Done That entered college with the plan on becoming a teacher. She had no idea that landing her first job would be so easy. For her, a recommendation from a former professor was a shoe in for her career as a teacher. Although she almost declined the job because of the lack of diversity, she accepted it and thrived as a teacher. Her first encounter with adversity came when she enrolled in the master's program for administration. She was urged by her assistant superintendent to change because there would be no positions in administration and the district could not provide funds for her in that program. She determined that she would fund the degree herself. She continued to teach in the district. After encountering so many obstacles, she resigned and pursued her doctorate as a full time student. The doors of opportunity sprang open when one of her professors found out she was a full time student. She was offered a fellowship, and a position working with alternative certification. The one position lead her to creating a niche in alternative certification. From this one door opening, many followed. Her network expanded and she was able to move into several positions at several universities.

Dr. On My Own Terms' Career Story

Dr. On My Own Terms transition into higher education came as somewhat of a surprise. She was in an administrative position and doing well. She had completed her doctorate however because she worked full time, she had not attended presented at conferences or published any articles. She had no thoughts of applying for positions in the professoriate. Then to her surprise, her dissertation chair called her recommending

that she apply for a position in another state. She interviewed for the position with the department chair and was hired. This experience prepared her for her next position in higher education.

Dr. Business First's Career Story

Dr. Business prepared to be a teacher as an undergraduate. She knew she would get her doctorate because she was driven by the challenge. She was an elementary school teacher, a middle school teacher and administrator. She was noticed for her work during her doctoral program by a renowned scholar who asked her work as a teaching assistant. This opportunity was perfect timing because her administrative position was not a good fit. During this period of time, she was able to accumulate herself in higher education. When she finished her doctoral courses and went back to her home state, she obtained a position in K-12. Her first position in higher education was an administrative role. The dean supported her efforts as she determined she should focus more on the faculty track.

For all four of these women professors their stories detail how they entered the professorate with the support of a professional mentor. There were no formal mentoring programs. They were recognized by other professionals who were willing to help them navigate the system. The following section details the role of mentors.

Professional Relationships/Mentors

Again professional relationships were significant for these four women in their K-12 careers as well as when they transitioned into higher education. Each of the participants understood the importance of their professional relationships. The people

they entered into these relationships often became their mentors. These mentoring relationships were not formal arrangement, they were informal and self-directed. These women received mentorship prior to receiving positions as professors. They knew the importance of learning from others and in each of their professional lives; someone saw their potential and encouraged them to advance in their profession. Dr. Business first said, "I've had limited mentorship in the roles that I've had in higher Ed". She adds The person who became a mentor for me was a faculty member in another department-another unit in our college of education. And she invited me to work on grants-just was very supportive and um at the time you know she really-just really helped me get acclimated and understand the personalities um even dealing with the particular supervisor I had at one point.

She recalls her mentor's role as "So the mentor served as you know sort of like a supporter. You know I don't want to use the word protector, but a supporter, an advocate. And um you know and helping getting things done". Dr. On My Own Terms says she really appreciated the role of a mentor. "I did not have an actual mentor until um, I came to um, an actual identified person that said I'm going to be your mentor until I came to XXXXXX University." She added "Some work environments are hostile and if you don't have a thick skin and a mentor to say let this roll off your back then you won't...I'm just...don't think you'll make it." She believed that the experience at a predominately white institution may be a greater challenge for African American women and included "I imagine that a PWI for a you know, for an African American or a person

of color could be even more hostile. And you know if you don't have a person with a thick skin, you know if you don't have a mentor to help you develop that thick skin... and during my transition time, my mentors just happened to-I was just really I was just blessed. And put into positions where I was-I had mentors who supported me. It wasn't something that I was seeking at the time-it just happened. And then I realized that you really do need those mentors." She continues with "I really did need a mentor who could teach me how to maneuver through the journey, to make it through. How not to hit brick walls. How not to get-you know-knocked down so many times."

Just as there were those who encouraged, supported, and mentored these women in their career and as they made the transition into higher education, they encountered doubters. The following section includes a description of some of the encounters with doubters.

In connecting the literature to the themes that have emerged, it is clear that the participants' stories that relate to mentorship, networking, and support are in complete alignment with the research. For example, in order to be successful, African American women professors must learn to locate appropriate support programs, identify key people for networking and mentoring, and seek spaces for accurate information and assistance within their departments. This is the basis for building social and cultural capital in the academic community.

Mentorship is important in terms of personal success as well as with mentoring of students. As we know from Blackwell's (1989) research, faculty members select and mentor students with whom they share similar characteristics such as race, gender,

ethnicity, etc. and the reverse is also true' students seek mentors from people who share similar racial and gender characteristics. Thus, in order to provide much-needed mentorship to underrepresented students, the number of faculty who share similar characteristics with students must be representative of the student population.

As indicated in chapter two, Snow (2011) offers a list specific acts necessary in order to be successful in the professoriate: a vast array of published works, effective mentor systems, positive personal relationships, appropriate support systems, and informal/formal networks. The importance of mentoring, particularly for African American women, is an essential key to personal and professional success. Hill and Ragland (1995) addressed the following three main functions of mentoring: (1) pointing the way, (2) providing support, and (3) challenging the mentee to strive for excellence.

Felder (1992) contends that women who want to succeed in any profession need a mentoring relationship. African American women need effective mentors because of (1) the paucity of African American women in senior level positions; (2) the fact that mentors tend to select protégés who share similar cultural and social attribute or background characteristics such as race and ethnicity; and (3) the social risks inherent in a non-minority person mentoring a minority one (Bassett, 1991). Although White males and other non-African American groups have successfully mentored African American women professors, some researchers have found that mentees are usually better served when their mentors are more like them (Johnson, 1998; Wilson, 1999; Allen et al., 1995). In addition to the support provided through mentoring, social networking also plays an important role in the success of African American women.

Support systems have become even more significant for Black faculty women who are attempting to juggle the demands of marriage, family, and career simultaneously (Gregory, 2001; Crawford & Smith, 2005; Hill-Collins, 1986; Souto & Ray, 2007; Atwater 199; Harley 199). Stanley (2006) pointed out that many faculty of color described mentors as people who played a major role in shaping their experiences and identities as scholars in the academy. This mentorship helped with not only teaching but with citizenship and development of leadership potential in their respective areas.

Dealing with Doubters

Again, relationships were very important to these four women in their K-12 careers as well as when they transitioned into higher education. These relationships served as positive and negative factors in their career transitions. Dr. New Plans was on an upward track in her career in the K-12 setting. She experienced doubters even after she had received her degree. She describes one experience with a former boss. “When I got my PhD, my boss, the white male, and he says,

“um, hey, you um, you're not gonna make the kids call you Dr, are you? I mean you're not like a real Dr, you know like, and this is like a school, you're not like a professor.' And I remember being like, What?, I said yeah, I'm gonna make them, yeah they're gonna call me Dr, and so are you.”

There was another incident where Dr. New Plans' colleague doubted that she could leave her current position. He undoubtedly felt that since her experience had been in K-12, that she explains, ‘didn't have a way out’. Dr. Been There Done That shares her

feelings about the doubt that is cast on African American women in the academy. She states,

“...at times being an African American woman, they might look at you like-you’ll see. When you get your doctorate it’s like you’re always being tested. You’ll have to prove who you are, that you deserve that title and you know in your heart that you have to and you know that you know that you know...But sometimes you do have to show it and some people may look at that as being arrogant, but I look at it as you know-this is who I am. Um I know what I know. And if you challenge me with it, I can do it. So, you can’t be offended of constantly being-it’s like a test.”

Although these professional women had all gone through the rigors of three degree programs and each held a terminal degree affirming their credentials, they encountered doubters. These doubters did not impede their success.

The women in this study offered replies to the interview questions relating to research question 2 with responses that described personal and professional experiences. They each convey a messages relating to the importance of personal and professional relationships. They admitted that sacrifices were made that affected their families, and their health. Their individual personal stories about how they landed positions in higher education all pointed to someone recognizing their work and their potential. In one case, a participant recounts, “it really did just happen”. Along with those who believed in the greatness of these women, there were also those who doubted. Learning to navigate the

academy is different from K-12, as these women discovered. Dr. Business first exclaimed, it is a different model and you cannot make one the other.

The final research question addresses the experiences of these women in their new role in higher education. It calls on them to share stories from the past as well as the present. The interview questions related to research question three resulted in four themes to be discussed in the following section.

Research Question 3 Analysis

How do African American women describe their experiences as it relates to their new roles in the professoriate in higher education?

New Role, New Responsibilities

None of the women in this study hesitated on the work required in their positions as faculty in higher education. The responsibilities included not only teaching but also research and service. In the capacity of teaching Dr. On My Own Terms described her expectation in teaching.

So maybe I am successful when I think about the students who actually get it and realize that teaching is not just about you. I'm really, really passionate about teaching not being just about you. When you sign that oath, educators' oath, saying that you understand that there are responsibilities to being a teacher... She adds, "if you're teaching in teacher Ed, all you're doing is teaching eager faces how to teach those eager faces". Dr. New Plan adds, "I teach in our masters and EDP program and all the things that come with being a professor from research service and teaching". There seemed to be much more involved in teaching at the college level. Dr. On My Own Terms

explained how reaches out to her students through an organization to teach them about financial planning.

“I have my group that I supervise, my organization. I have speakers coming every month and I always have a money marketing person, a money manager come in to speak to them about managing money.”

The service component for these women was a large part of their responsibility as professors. Dr. Business First articulates the sentiments of each participant in this statement:

“There is a Heavy advising component. We teach online, face to face, in hybrid courses. Heavy advising component in terms of directing students, what they need to take. ...there’s a lot of committee work. Committee work for intake, committee for data, committee work for uh, recruitment, retention, a lot of what we do is committee work...in terms of... ..just a lot of service. ...working with the dissertations students, that’s a heavy service component. And then we do some research as well. But the bulk of the roles that I’ve had while being an associate professor and being held, holding leadership roles at my current institution, it’s included a lot of ... administrative, like coordinating programs, compiling information for reports – all of that.”

There was some emphasis on research as well. Dr. On My Own Terms believed she had not been as successful because she had not published. Dr. New Plans indicated that it was critical to schedule time to write. She even shares a moment of validation when a student contacts her for an interview after reading something she published. Dr.

Business First emphasized the importance attending conferences have played in her career. She notes they are great for networking and the exposure to new research. Dr. Been There Done That shared her interest in service to the local community where her campus is located. She is always seeking funds to bring programs to serve the urban youth near her university.

The participants each discussed the critical role of teaching, research and service plays in the daily schedules and planning as a professor. These new responsibilities are different than K-12. Two of the participants discussed the differences that exist between K-12 and higher education. One participant notes, the models are not the same and you cannot go into higher education expecting them to function the same.

Snow (2011) shared successful acts of African American women in faculty ranks based on a study conducted to share the participants' views of their journey into the professoriate. This study exposed three themes within successful acts: success in publishing, giving back to the community, and experiencing the journey as it evolves. This speaks to one of the main responsibilities as a professor, publishing.

According to the 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, published by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, full-time faculty members work about fifty-five hours a week, and part-time faculty work nearly forty. The work that professors do is typically described in terms of research, teaching, and offering service. Gordon (1986) suggests however that this is an oversimplification of the roles and responsibilities, primarily because of the variation across different institutions.

In a preliminary study by anthropologist Ziker (2014), called Time Allocation Workload Knowledge Study (TAWKS), 30 professors from Boise State University were asked to recall everything they had done over the past 24 hours. Participants reported an average of 61 hours per week spent working, including about 10 hours on the weekend. In a blog related to work-life balance for professors, Ishaq explained that there is significant variety by position and by university but that faculty at universities and colleges are required to teach, conduct research, advise students, write and apply for grants, administer grant budgets, serve on committees, conduct candidate searches, perform community outreach and other tasks. This is complicated, as student populations increase with decreasing faculty and thereby leading to increasing numbers of hours spent working.

Many studies document the fact that African American women often feel stretched to their limits with their ability to balance personal and professional responsibilities (Edwards, 1997; Rusher, 1996; Moses, 1989; Reid-Merritt, 1996; Wolfman, 1997). Particularly in instances when African American women are few in number on their individual campuses, the competing demands for role models and representation can be overwhelming. These feelings of being overwhelmed can impede professional as well as personal success. This is further compounded when these few African American are taxed with the additional responsibilities as described in the concept of cultural taxation.

The Isms Rear Their Ugly Heads

Throughout their careers, these women experienced racism, ageism and sexism. Perhaps it was their preparation in the K-12 setting that they were experienced to handle what they would encounter in academia.

Ageism, Racism, Sexism

Dr. New Plans shared her experience with one professor who very overtly practice ageism when considering what courses she would teach. She explained,

“Oh, I want to just, I know you're teaching EdD, PhD, I really think you should teach undergrad, because they'll think you're young and they'll like you.' And I looked at her like 'this has nothing to do with my intelligence, what I can offer them, you think because I look young, that they'll learn from me.”

The professor may not have realized this micro-aggressive comment was not a compliment. She also experienced comments from a male counterpart,

“Yeah they'll think you look young and they'll, they'll wanna take your class' you know', I'm like lady, no. But, I think the most pivotal that I could really see the intersection would be the one I told you about, my school director, because that, he was very, um, he didn't think I would be leaving, he didn't think I would, I had a way out, you know like when I was like yeah I might be going with my advisor, blah blah blah' and he was like 'Oh really? Like he's really gonna like give you a position?’”

Dr. Business First experienced acts of sexism by male students and faculty. She offers,

“Um you know I’ve noticed there’s been sexism in some of the institutions I’ve worked in. Sometimes it can be very direct and very offensive, and very blatant and very hurtful, but you have to be able to really persevere.”

Both Dr. Business First and Dr. On My Own Terms commented on pay discrepancies between women and men.

“But I still do observe the sexism that exists in higher education in terms of the differences between female faculty members and male faculty members pay. The expectations put of female faculty members. Um you’ll always be expected to do you know some roles that are related to gender where male professors don’t have to do that.”

“Well just like I said I feel that I’m probably paid less. You know we just got raises and I know that the college of education’s raises were the least. Umm you know my bottom line is I was hired in---females, the females in our unit are hired in at the least at the low-end of the pay scale. Males are hired in higher. Now if we were to look at SACS credentials I’m probably one of the few that qualify to be where I’m supposed to be, but yet I’m hired in a low-end of the pay scale.(shoulder shrug...mmmnnnn)”

It is clear these women have not been immune to personal instances of ageism and sexism. There were other scenarios during interviewing process that points to possible racism. Dr. New Plans suggest that when women especially African American women are not occupying decision making roles, like search committees, it limits the

possibility of other African American women being selected when positions are open.

The system is maintained to retain the status quo.

Taylor (2004) examined issues of race, gender, and power on the leadership influence of another kind of leader, an African American woman principal. In this study, Taylor found that in order for an African American woman to be successful in leadership positions in predominantly white environments, she must play by the rules of traditional patriarchy.

While there is a clear increase in the numbers of women in the professoriate, there is still a gap, albeit narrowing, and these women continue to experience their higher education professorial positions differently from men, as is shown by fewer assistant, associate, full, and tenured women professors, and on average lower salaries (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c). Further, Alfred's (2001) study showed that African American female faculty found professional success in the White institutional culture by creating positive images of self-definition and rejecting stereotypical images of themselves as Black women, finding a safe space where they could reaffirm themselves as Black women, knowing the academic culture and its role expectations, becoming visible within their disciplinary and institutional cultures, and maintaining a fluid life structure from which they could draw the power necessary to negotiate White-dominated cultures.

I'm A Superwoman

The role of a professor is a job that never seems to be complete. Dr. New Plans explained there is always something to do and everything never gets done. This is

something each of these women experienced in their positions as professors. Although they each had the support of family and friends, they expressed a need for some sort of super human ability. Perhaps Dr. New Plan's best describes the sentiments of these women when it comes to their home life.

"I didn't have the benefit of having a wife take care of me when I got home, cook dinner for me, you know, whatever it may be, it was crap. I'm the female, I have to go home, I have to take care of all this stuff, um, on my own."

Dr. Been There Done That adds,

"I still have students from all of the universities who will call me, and, some of them, if, I, if they were from my class from Masters will say 'Okay I'm working on my Doctorate, this is what I'm thinking about.' It's always this need of, like counselling and advising, it's not something that just cuts off, um, it's the same characteristics but it's just that you have uh, an older student."

All of the professors expressed added responsibilities for women. They mentioned more administrative roles than their male counterparts.

The representation of African American females in higher education administration is also lower than that of their racial and gender counterparts. They are generally promoted at a slower rate, receive the lowest salaries, and teach only part-time. They are mostly found among the lowest ranks of the professorate, primarily in non-tenured positions within the traditional disciplines of education, the social sciences, and the professions (Gregory, 2001; Howard-Vital, 1989). The significance of this issue is

rooted in the racial and social injustices presented by many institutions of higher learning.

As Patton (2004) suggests, “the issue of racism and sexism in academe gains heightened importance particularly as positionality of the outsider-within not only remains entrenched, but also continues to produce and present numerous challenges and consequences” (p. 198). Black women always knew of their own marginalization, but they were making others aware that their subordination was rooted in oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation all at once (Hill-Collins, 2009).

The Weight on Our Shoulders

Being a Black female brings on many responsibilities. These four women found themselves in positions where they felt the weight of representing the African American race, females and particularly African American females. This played out in their professional lives in numerous ways. For example, Dr. New Plans found herself being the voice for women to recommend other women scholars for professional conference events. She had to remind her colleagues that there were capable women scholars in the field to consider when seeking presenters for lectures.

In each of the participant’s careers, they found themselves being the only Black female. For Dr. New Plans, it was in her first role as a professor. She reflected on a university wide orientation for new hires. The president was discussing how they were committed to diversity and moving forward with the initiatives she recounts “when I scanned the room, there was one African American male and one African American female. I was the female.”

Not only did these women feel responsible for representing women in the field but also students of color on their various campuses. Just as the research has proven, students gravitate to what is familiar (Blackwell, 1989). For Black students on predominantly White campuses, this occurs when students find there is a Black faculty member. They gravitate to these professors with hopes and expectations.

Dr. New Plans explained that only after a few weeks on her campus, the students sought her out and asked that she be the advisor for the Black graduate association. She admits that as one of very few Black women faculty, “it’s serious, it’s sad, it’s lonely, it’s a lot of pressure”.

These women held personal goals and visions for being leaders for African Americans and women. They felt personally responsible for helping students of color at their prospective universities. They share their feelings of personal responsibility in the following statements. Dr. Been There Done That states,

“Now I’m at a historical black college, so, it’s a real need to make sure that, uh, it’s important that the students get everything that they deserve. And, um, I’m really good at helping them pass the test. So I love helping them get certified to teach, so that we can, um, have a lot of good teachers, minorities who are qualified.”

Dr. On My Own Terms adds her passion for Black students and Healthcare. “I’m really passionate about getting them to pass the test so that they can get a real job so that they can get the health benefits. You don’t know how much you need benefits until you’ve had a catastrophic illness like I had.”

In their various positions at their various institutions these women found roles as professors to be far more than a teaching position. In institutions of higher learning there are research and service requirements. They were actively involved in student and community organizations. They pursued grants to fund projects of interest and sought opportunities to engage with colleagues in academic interest. They managed these responsibilities in the midst of environments that were not always conducive. They encounter acts of sexism, ageism and racism.

These women found they were expected to do more and were paid less. They felt personally responsible for the achievement of students of color in their classrooms and beyond. They all had visions related to making a difference and impacting the lives of children through teachers.

Summary of Findings

This research was conducted to add to the literature in this field by taking a deeper look at African American women who have successfully transitioned from a career in K-12 educational settings into the professoriate at a four-year collegiate institution. Three overarching question guided the study, they were (a) How do African American women describe their leadership characteristics as urban K-12 administrators to a career in the professoriate? (b) How do African American women describe their experiences related to their transition from administrative careers in K-12 settings into the professoriate? and, (c) How do African American women describe their experiences as it relates to their new roles in the professoriate in higher education? This study was conducted using a qualitative methodology. There were four participants included in the

study. This chapter detailed the findings and data analysis using an interpretive approach. A summary of the findings from the three research questions follows.

Research question 1 focused on the leadership characteristics of the participants. There were five themes that emerged as identifiers of these leadership characteristics. They include (a) visionary (b) hardworking (c) impactful (d) confident and (e) resilient. The rich descriptions provided in the stories these four women share confirm much of what is suggested in the literature as detailed in the analytical conclusion of each section.

Research question 2 focused on the experiences of these women as they transitioned from K-12 settings into the professoriate. The findings reveal 2 major themes in response to the interview questions. Their experiences were both personal and professional. In terms of personal experiences two subthemes emerged; the importance of having supportive relationships and their willingness to make sacrifices. In terms of professional experiences, the women each shared detail stories of how they landed their first positions in higher education. The stories included the point that someone in their professional circle directed them to the positions. Although the women were not in any formal mentoring arrangement, they considered the colleague who provided the direction their mentors. One final point that emerged was that these women encountered doubters as they transitioned. They came in the form of supervisors, district administrators and colleagues. The women were all supported in their personal relationships.

The final research question was aimed at gathering a deeper understanding of what these women experienced after they obtained their jobs at four-year collegiate institutions. Four themes emerged from the interview questions related to this question.

The women found there were new roles and responsibilities as professors. They also discovered they were in an environment that was male dominated and not always supportive of women as the isms sometimes reared its ugly head in an institution that should be the most progressive in terms of leading society. These women also felt their responsibilities were exceptional and they felt not only responsible but specifically committed to African American students. This is a fulfilling yet burdensome responsibility.

Although these women did not seem comfortable describing themselves as successful, they each in one way or another believed they were transforming lives. They were humble in how they expressed their ability to transform not only the lives they touched but the universities where they worked. Dr. New Plans said that although it was hard for her to evaluate her own impact and work, she was interested in “leaving a place better than what I found it” working within the system to bring about change. This passion was to initiate change was not limited to the students they served but to other women seeking position in the professoriate. They each shared information they believed would be helpful to other African American women with aspirations of entering the academy. Their recommendations are included in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the study which describes the purpose, methodology, and guiding research questions. Additionally, I present a discussion and summary of the findings showing how these findings relate to the research questions and make connections to the existing literature. In so doing, I present the implications that the study may have in terms of policy, practice and theory. In concluding, I also highlight recommendations for future research.

Summary of Study and Discussion of Findings

This research study sought to explore and interpret the professional and personal experiences of African American women who transitioned from K-12 educational settings to the professoriate. The research addressed the specific issues experienced by African American women in terms of their transition into the professoriate. The following research questions guided this study: (a) How do African American women describe their leadership characteristics as urban K-12 administrators as they transitioned in the professoriate? (b) How do African American women describe their experiences related to their transition from administrative careers in K-12 settings into the professoriate? and, (c) How do African American women describe their experiences as it relates to their new roles in the professoriate?

Drawing on Black Feminist Theory to provide an interpretive position of gender, race, and class within the ranks of career transitioning for African American women, I

chose to use a qualitative research methodology for this study. The study utilized a narrative approach to express selected individuals' personal experiences. Narrative research uses an in depth description of the experiences of specific individuals to provide better analyze and understand the stories lived and told (Creswell 2007, p. 54). In an effort to construct meaning of their personal and professional experiences, I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews to reveal details about the events, beliefs, and perceptions of these women about their own lives.

I reviewed the literature that I felt was relevant to the study including a review of the overall structure of the American education system; a historic and contemporary overview of African American women in the academy presented in terms of the resistance they have demonstrated in spite of various kinds of oppression; description of the issue of faculty diversity in higher education with emphasis on African American women; an overview of leadership with special focus on transformational theory and the concept of connected leadership; and an overview of the advantages and disadvantages faced by African American women with recommendations to enhance their success.

The themes that emerged from the data are presented in relation to the major research questions that guided the study. The major themes for research question one included being: (a) visionary (b) hardworking (c) impactful (d) confident and (e) resilient. The themes for research question 2 were (a) personal experiences and (b) professional experiences. In terms of personal experiences two sub-themes emerged. They were (a) supportive personal relationships and (b) making sacrifices. The theme of professional experiences had three sub-themes (a) landing the job (b) professional

relationships/mentors and (c) dealing with doubters. The themes for research question 3 were (a) new roles; new responsibilities (b) The 'isms' rear their ugly heads (c) I'm a Superwoman and (d) feeling the weight of the world on our shoulders.

As the data were being analyzed, resulting in these emergent themes, the guiding questions served as a focal point of the research. Additionally, the theoretical framework provided the lens for a discussion about the factors leading to a successful transition into the professoriate.

Successful Career Transitioning Prior to Professoriate

It is through a lens of Black Feminist Thought and Social Cognitive Career theory that I attempt to analyze the participants' interpretation of their own success. Although there is an enormous amount of research focused on the barriers facing African American women as they attempt to enter the scholarly ranks of higher education, the fact remains that there are very few African American women successfully transitioning into the 4-year university professoriate. Black Feminist Thought reminds us that although African Americans and women face obstacles in the academy the women in this study ascribe to two statuses and therefore experience life and education differently and more intensely than women of other races and men of the same race (Hill-Collins 2009).

The Social Cognitive Career Theory asserts that because these women have self-efficacy, nothing will deter them from reaching their career goals (Leung 2008). The participants in this study have met multiple barriers during their journey into the professoriate and in spite of any setbacks were able to successfully transition from a

career in k12 administration into the higher education professoriate. This next section will share some of the factors that contributed to their successful transition into the professoriate. An intermingling of my personal experiences and participant quotes from their interviews will be used to support the interpreted meanings of their experiences.

When I was in my twenties, I knew I was going to be a medical doctor, but there was no one in my circle of influence to guide me toward success. It was during that time that my parents showed up and gave me the confidence to move forward as an educator. Their encouragement has always been a source of support for me when faced with adversity. The women in this story had to depend on their families as well to support them in a variety of situations.

Dr. Business First spoke of needed someone in her corner to assist when adversities would arise, “So that’s important have a support-people needing some type of support system...you have a family... if you are independent, you know...networking with people who can have a positive impact and influence.” Dr. On My Own Terms says with regard to facing the obstacle and opportunity of relocating for a job, “my parents, you know, they were just supportive regardless...”. Dr. New Plans tells a story of her father encouraging her to accept a post-doc fellowship in lieu of there being no offer of funding. He helped her to take a risk which paid off for her career success. And through all of the personal sacrifices, Dr. Been There Done That proudly expressed the support of her mother and husband with caring for her children over the years.

As a near 30 year old, I bought a house, got married, and had kids. I was interviewing to become a secondary school administrator and the offers were not in

excess. I was on the verge of giving up when colleagues and co-workers reminded me of all that I had to offer students and teachers. They pushed me toward the next phase by believing in me and promoting me and my experiences at any chance available. I was eventually offered two positions during the same week. This type of collegial support and encouragement was also experienced by each of the participants in this study. As we move to the next phase of our careers, the support of our colleagues served as a factor contributing to our success.

Dr. New Plans talks specifically about two friends who encouraged her to attain her PhD and to move into administration from the classroom. When speaking of her transition from the classroom into an assistant principal, Dr. Business First states, “The school district people really wanted to have minority teachers and leaders in all of those school districts. They wanted people of color who were really competent, successful and could really reach the minority kids. So that’s how the opportunity presented itself.”

Dr. On My Own Terms expressed, “My supervisor, then director of bilingual ed said, ‘I want you and another person to be co-principals of the bilingual summer school.’”

That summer she was able to transition into the assistant principal position with ease and the support of this colleague whom she had worked with prior to this opportunity.

Dr. Been There Done That states, “The superintendent there hired me who was my um professor at Sam Houston State University...he was real, real supportive in me leaving the classroom.”

Upon realizing if I wanted to reach my dreams of being a university administrator I had to become a professor first, I once again found myself searching for

a role model to guide this next-level career change. This phase brings on the journey of the dissertation. During this time, I was inspired by my professors and mentors to press forward. They helped to prepare me for the actual transition into the professoriate which was similar to each of the participants in this study.

Dr. New Plans says, “He [dissertation committee chair] invited me to come... to do a post doc there because...I never was thinking about it...and my post doc was like probably the most transformative experience to where I am now.” She is currently an associate professor at a 4-year university on the east coast. In reference to her first dive into higher education as an administrative liaison, Dr. Business First states, “I received a lot of support from the dean. He always supported me, always!” He was supportive of her moving into higher education later as a professor in another state as well. Dr. On My Own Terms expressed, “I was told by one of these three ladies [named mentors] a certain um professor...was coming to town to recruit people to go to Southern University...that oh no they want you to come to Southern University.” This was her first step into the professoriate after multiple applications to local schools were turned down. She persevered until she heard the word, yes. When talking about her entry into higher education which led to her tenure-track position, Dr. Been There Done That states, “I interned under Dr. XYZ at ABC University who had just been promoted to the certification office position. She just chose me out of the classroom when she found out that I was full-time and I had been teaching for 15 years, she says ‘oh, do you want a doctoral fellowship?’ and um, that’s the way I got it.”

Success in the Professoriate

This section will expose the many characteristics shared by the participants that assisted them with success in their new position as a professor. They all expressed the need to be focused, self-driven, self-motivated, highly organized, continue learning new things, and to be able to keep up with lots of work.

Each participant also stated new professors must find a mentor to support them and to guide them through the ivory tower of academia. Dr. Business First said her mentor “served as...a supporter, an advocate. And um you know and helping getting things done.” Dr. New Plans says “having great mentors that really um inspired me and encouraged me and kinda told me that I could do it then the self-efficacy started to develop.” Dr. Been There Done That said you have to “have the correct connections”. “Although you must be highly qualified, relationships are very key to success in the professoriate. [You must] have a mentor, someone to support-that you’re not trying to figure everything out by yourself.” Dr. On My Own Terms stated her mentors had “behavior that they modeled that I admired. Always professional but caring. Very precise. Things always ready to go. Always ready to teach.” Mentorship was represented in multiple ways and at various points along the journey. It is clear that mentorship is the major contributor to continued success in the professoriate.

There were innate skills that each participant shared, some in common that a successful African American woman professor should exhibit. Dr. Business First responded “I think that you have to have an understanding of the environment that you’re working in, what the requirements are, and you have to be able to put in the

diligence and put in the effort uh to make the project successful.” Dr. New Plans stated not only do you need to be confident in yourself, but you must leave time for “planning, so I would say there's the vision, the commitment and then executing the plan.” Dr. Been There Done That shared, “If you just see how much power you have within yourself, um, you'll be okay. You'll be okay and really, really trust yourself.” Dr. On My Own Terms said, quite frankly, “You're gonna have to stick with it.”

When asked, in the face of the ‘isms, ‘How do you continue moving forward?’ Dr. Been There Done That summed it up by saying,

“You just really, really have to stay professional you’re gonna have disagreements. Uh, because it’s a lot of egos in higher ed. And you have to know how to just go with it and move on and not let it stop you from getting where you want to get in higher ed.”

All of the women shared that a successful African American woman professor is positive, does her best, and believes in herself. As shared explicitly by two participants and vaguely by the other two participants, spirituality plays a huge part in sustaining success in the professoriate. Dr. Business First expressed,

“Another piece of it that helps me on a day to day basis is my faith. I have a faith in a higher power. I'm a Christian and so um...I do a lot of meditation and scripture reading, to be able to make it on a daily basis. Then that's a source of great strength for me, my faith and spirituality...It's just as important, equal to my drive and ambition.”

All of the women said it is necessary to strike a balance between student and community service projects, research interests by publishing and attending conferences, and continuing to grow as a teacher with great responsibilities. All of these things were named as factors attributing to success in the professoriate for African American women transitioning from other areas.

It is of utmost importance that African American women will continue to tell their lived experiences in the academy. As readers and future researchers attempt to interpret the meanings of these stories and the stories of other women like them through the lens of Black Feminist Thought, it is pertinent for these African American women to have knowledge of their own sense of Blackness.

Nigrescence in a Nutshell

A factor which is evident within each participant's story is their level of Blackness, awareness of self-identity, or how closely they relate to their Nigrescence. While analyzing the lived experiences of these women, it became easy to see that while Nigrescence is important for their own self-identity and definition of self-efficacy and success, the varying levels as described by Cross 1991 did not directly impact their success in the professoriate.

Dr. Business First stressed the importance of the traditional educational environment and the support of the dominant group in the society was in many ways directly inverse of the description she gave of her encounters with groups of color. This has given me the interpretive gumption to place her in Cross' level one of Nigrescence, pre-encounter. This is described as a low-salience type of mindset where not much

thought is given to race issues. Cross 1991 states, “They often see personal progress as a matter of free will, initiative, rugged individualism, and a personal motivation to achieve” (p. 191). When asked about HBCUs versus PWIs, Dr. Business First says, “The overarching culture drives how a proper organization operates...if you have a culture that’s focused then people are gonna follow the culture. If the culture is loose...not really goal oriented...more social...people are gonna follow that.”

Dr. New Plans was adamant about providing space and structure for the development of African American students in the face of the dominant group in the academy. She spoke in terms of the actions that she personally put into place to impact the education of an entire community from grades kindergarten to 12 as she provided support to the governing board for founding this urban school. As the interpreter of her shared lived experiences, I, with great confidence, assign her to a level four Nigrescence, internalization. As written in Cross 1991, One of the most important consequences of this inner peace is that a person’s conception of Blackness tends to become more open, expansive, and sophisticated. As defensiveness fades, simplistic thinking and simple solutions become transparently inadequate, and the full complexity and inherent texture of the Black condition become the point of departure for serious analysis p.211.

Dr. New Plans says, “I’m...so much more heavily focused on race, um, that's like my marker, I am a black female before I'd say female or anything else. I am black, um, that's what I identify the most with.”

Dr. On My Own Terms responded most of the time about her familial and

community connections with regard to educational experiences. While I know her stories had a wealth of information hidden in their ambiguities, her responses were very literal and surface level. Because of her innate ability to steer away from questions about racism, ageism, classism, or overt sexism, I emphatically label her pre-encounter. She is in the ranks of someone with a low-salience attitude. While she does not deny being Black, she does not focus on her Blackness as an important role in her success. She seemed more focused on other aspects of value such as social status, her lifestyle, and her profession (Cross 1991).

Dr. Been There Done That spent time talking about her myriad of experiences during her educational career. She was very open and frank about various instances of racism. She talked about not backing down, but being prepared to speak up for herself when the time was right. Her acknowledgment of her Blackness and her ability to identify her connection to race in a given situation gives me reason to label her Nigrescence as a level four, internalization. She represented a more defensive and protective function of Black identity. “The defensive function of Black identity becomes more sophisticated and flexible...allows nonthreatening information and experiences to be processed without distortion (Cross 1991, p. 215). As she shared her stories, portions of the protective function of internalization stand out which were represented by an awareness that racism is inherent in America and no matter who you are or where you are from racism could impact you.

It is a must to share our identity struggles as they may be a continuum of phases which people revisit during different times in their lives. The identity struggles found

here are uniquely experienced by women who are of African American decent. As we grow as educators, our thoughts about ourselves grow as well. We become more aware of what we stand for and what will make us live in our purpose. As these women progress through their career transition journey, it is evident that their identities have definitely evolved. This evolution of the African American woman professor make her work, her presence, her voice important.

Importance of African American Women in the Professoriate

The purpose of African American women in education is of great significance and this study amplifies the importance of successful African American women in the professoriate. It is natural to wonder what makes this study different from so many others. The answer lies in the unique status of its participants. These women experience education through the lens of being a woman and through the ideologies of being African American. Because of this duality, the intersectionality of sexism, racism, and ageism are more intensely experienced by African American women transitioning into the professoriate.

As described in the historical context in chapter 2, African American women have had a long history of success in the professoriate. Their success was many times not shared because they were not allowed to be named the teacher, the administrator, the leader, the professor because they were a woman. Once women were afforded some recognition in American education, these women's stories and voices were still silenced because they were African American. Now that the number of African American women

students and teachers has increased, it is important to increase the number of professors that are representative of these women. The amount and depth of research on African American women in the professoriate must be elevated.

The presence of these women in higher education plays a major role in the landscape of American higher education. These women possess a wealth of knowledge with respect to cultural connection with students of color. This bank of cultural knowledge is essential when making personal meaning during authentic learning experiences especially in higher education. The African American female professor has an especially rich connection to her faith. This faith-based foundation is vital to the resilience of African American women students and faculty. This faith allows the African American professor to connect with the families of her students, the students, and other faculty members. It assists with the ability of these women to inspire others to follow her successful lead because they have a similar spiritual connection.

The American education system is like an interwoven tapestry showcasing the differences and strengths of the various groups that make up the system. African American women have added depth to the texture of this hypothetical tapestry by sharing their actual lived experiences. It is crucial to future generations of African American women professors to have access to the lived experiences of these successful women to serve as a record of excellence and an inspiration to strive for excellence and success in their own careers. African American women have the ability to reach students when other professors tend to cast them aside. The extra time that is given to the struggling student, the working student, the mothering student is quite evident through

experiences shared by African American women. These women are able to access their caring nature to meet the needs of their students and other like-experienced faculty members.

In my most recent experience, an African American woman professor was present during my dissertation journey. She made late night and early morning phone calls to offer her support and to encourage me to never give up. She sent emails and notes to my home to remind me of deadlines and requirement specifics. She shadowed me at work to better understand my outside responsibilities in an effort to assist with ideas for time management and stress relief. She included me in global travel opportunities which I would have never been afforded otherwise. She invited me into her home for advisory sessions related to this dissertation journey. This is my example, but this is the essence of the African American professor and her importance in the academy.

It is because of her that I am and it will be because of me that others like me will follow this journey. She is important because she represents the victory of and for the women like her from the past: Sarah Woodson Early, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Sadie Alexander, and Lucy Diggs Slowe. She is important because she represents confidence in herself, value in her self-worth, knowledge of who she is, and victorious status within her purpose. She is important because she represents the tenacious spirit of women past, present, and future. Together we can raise our voices to write our own narrative of the African American women in higher education. WE MATTER BECAUSE SHE IS ME AND I AM HER.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Theory

Based on the findings of this study and the literature reviewed, implications and recommendations will now be discussed. The study's findings have implications for the field of urban education, particularly as it relates to policy, practice, and theory for supporting African American women who seek to transition from careers in K-12 education settings to the professoriate.

Implications for Policy

As a matter of policy, with direct implications also for practice, colleges and universities need to provide a strong mentorship programs. This is very important based on the importance of mentorship, particularly for students and faculty of color. The academic literature illustrates the usefulness, importance, and significance of mentorship as an influencer on success (Hill & Ragland, 1995; Felder, 1992; Bassett, 1991). This is a crucial piece to success and students need to be guided towards a mentor who best suits their needs and this may include ensuring an adequate number of faculty of color as some research has found that mentees are usually better served when their mentors are more like them (Johnson, 1998; Wilson, 1999; Allen et al., 1995). African American female professors should spend time providing strict guidance in this area and building stronger mentorship bonds.

Another implication of this study, as far as policy is concerned, is that colleges and universities, especially predominantly White institutions, should actively and deliberately work towards increasing faculty diversity. This would mean that universities should also spend time revamping their policies and deliberately recruit and retain

faculty of color. Specific attention should be directed towards recruitment and salary offers for African American women professors and towards eliminating any disparities in salaries and tenure and promotion decisions. This is imperative because being overworked and being underpaid can only create dissension in the ranks and offer poor morale.

Implications for Practice

The study's findings provide valuable insights into some practical strategies that could be implemented to support African American women as they transition from careers in K-12 education settings to the professoriate. Campuses need to provide more opportunities for professional networking. Some students are not as successful because they do not have exposure to certain situations. The same is true for African American women in the professoriate. These networking opportunities should strive to expose African American women new to the professoriate to outstanding experiences so that they can develop supportive networks and build their capacity and resources to ensure their success, both as they transition into their new careers as well as try to develop through the faculty development cycle.

Research on the experiences of African Americans in higher education demonstrates that strong social networks and support are essential tools for success for African American women professors (Baber, 2010; Barnett, 2004, Bradley & Sanders, 2003; Cole, 1994; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Fries-Britt, 2002; Foster, 2003; Gallien & Peterson, 2005). African American women must capitalize on their support networks in order to positively impact their success.

African American women in the professoriate should have an opportunity to report micro-aggressions or other forms of harassment and discrimination without repercussion. There should be some type of venue that offers an open forum for discussion or some specific group counseling to offer support to their daily struggles. This could be done at departmental levels based on a macro-level policy that supports and encourages diversity in the professorial ranks.

Implications for Theory

Black Feminist Theory provides us with a body of literature that tries to counter dominant and hegemonic practices particularly affecting Black women (Collins, 2009). The work in this study contributes to this body of literature as the findings highlight inconspicuous ways in which African American women are oppressed in higher education. This study broadens the discussion and provides an opportunity for more minority scholarship that can speak from a place of experience, marginalization, and therefore, authority. It is through this scholarship that we can advance work in debilitating structures that cripple and stifle pride in Black culture and expression. As such, African American women professors should strive to publish more and present their perspectives in the academic literature and increase the platforms from which their voices can be heard.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this research point to several areas in need of further exploration. First, the participants' stories should serve as a reminder to educators and scholars across the globe that there is still discrimination against African American women in the

academy. It would be useful for researchers to consider replicating this study with women from other marginalized populations. For example, a similar study could be done with the focus on Hispanic female professors. This is particularly relevant at a time when the US demographic landscape is changing and the numbers of Hispanics are growing exponentially. These women have a similar experience of marginalization and their stories are also rarely heard.

An expansion of this research could also be done through the offices of the university presidents. It would be useful to qualitatively expose the lived experiences of African American women who have successfully been selected as the president of a 4year university. An additional study could be a comparative analysis of the experiences of African American women presidents at PWIs and HBCUs.

Conclusion

As I am currently an African American female administrator in the K12 setting and I will be seeking a position as a professor, this research has had a dynamic impact on my life in transition. I have become aware of the pieces I need to put in place in order to move on to the next step in this career transition. I suppose I am a walking model of many of the illustrations provided by the participants in this study.

When asked, “What legacy would you leave to African American women pursuing a career in higher education?” These excerpts provide a great conclusion for this body of work.

Dr. BF says,

“Think long and hard about whether or not you wanna do this...and be very careful about where you accept a position. Know who you are...and be open. First and foremost, be a learner. Always critically think...So that's the biggest piece of advice too. Don't be in love with the position...Make sure you are a fit for that place...if you wanna make an impact in K12, go to more of a K12 teaching focused institution. If you want to make a contribution to research, make sure you are able to go to a research institution. You gotta make sure you're a fit and you wanna know where you wanna go and what you wanna do.”

This study specifically analyzed the lived experiences of four African American women who have successfully transitioned from a career as a K12 administrator into the higher education professoriate. It is my hope that the stories presented from the words of these participants will encourage other African American women to press on and continue as she too strives to be the best professor ever.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why do you do what you do?
2. Tell me about your current position? K12 position(s)?
3. What obstacles have you overcome to reach your current position?
4. How do you describe the pivotal points in your career from teacher to admin to higher education? What about pivotal moments in your childhood that have led you to this career path?
5. How have your personal experiences impacted your career? What types of support systems are necessary to sustain your success? Examples?
6. How do you define and describe successful acts of an educational leader?
7. What qualities have been critical to your success? Expound upon some certain behaviors, values, beliefs.
8. How would you define and describe transformational leadership? How do you exercise your acts of transformational leadership?
9. How are you impacted by intersectionality? What motivates you to keep moving forward?
10. How do you interpret your work? How does your work impact the community?
School, home, work, black culture, women and black feminism, career transitions?
11. What legacy would you leave to African American women pursuing a career in higher education?

APPENDIX B
CASE STUDY CONSENT FORM

Investigator: Sunday Johnson

Dr. Norvella Carter, Advisor

Home: (281) 642-3861

Work: (281) 634-6384

The purpose of this project is to examine and (re)interpret the life experiences and leadership practices of four African American women, former administrators in K12 schools who have transitioned into a career in the professoriate. Its purpose is also to determine the constructed meanings of their personal and professional acts of success while navigating a career in the professoriate.

The study shall be conducted in south Texas with the length of each interview (approximately two) ranging from one and one half to three hours.

I, _____, understand that:

(1) The written information obtained during this project will be used to write a case study which will be read by the respondents, the project advisor, the project investigator, and one class member who will conduct a check of the data. The case study will not be disseminated to others without the written permission of the participants involved in this project. Optional audio recordings may be used as data.

- (2) All participants' names will remain confidential and no risks, benefits or compensation will be involved.
- (3) I am entitled to review the case study before the final draft is written and negotiate changes with the investigator.
- (4) I may withdraw (with no penalty) from this study at any time by speaking to the investigator and all data collected from me will be returned immediately.
- (5) Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

Audio recordings of the interview(s) are optional. Please mark below whether you consent or decline participation in audio recording of the interview(s). Your consent or decline does not impact your consent to participate in the interview.

_____ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

_____ I do not give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For questions about your rights as a research participant; or if you have questions, complaints,

or concerns about the research you may contact the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program at 979.458.4067, toll-free at 1.855.795.8636, or email at irb@tamu.edu

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all of my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject:

Date:

Principle Investigator:

Date:

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

To Possible Dissertation Study Participants:

My name is Sunday Price-Johnson and I am a graduate student in the department of education at Texas A&M University. My research is in need of participants meeting the following criteria: African American women who are university professors and were once K12 campus level administrators. You have been identified as a person meeting that description. This email serves as a recruitment tool for a possible study participant. It would be an honor if you would agree to serve as a participant in this dissertation study. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me as soon as possible. I will present you with more information about the study including a consent to study form.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sunday Price- Johnson

TAMU Urban Education Graduation Student

281-642-3861

Sunday.johnson@tamu.edu

APPENDIX D

TABLES

TABLE 1.A: PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION			
Name (Alias)	Years in Education	Current Position	Previous Positions
Dr. Business First	24	Associate Professor	Elementary Teacher Middle School Teacher Elem. Assistant Principal Intern University Program Director
Dr. New Plans	19	Associate Professor	Elementary Teacher Reading Specialist High School Counselor/Administrator Post Doc Fellowship
Dr. Been There Done That	33	Tenure Track Full Professor	Elementary Teacher Middle School Assistant Principal District Level Coordinator District Level Director Associate Professor
Dr. On My Own Terms	30	Associate Professor	Elementary School Bilingual Teacher Bilingual Summer School Assistant Principal Elementary School Assistant Principal District Level Director

TABLE 1.B: EMERGING THEMES

Research Question	Major Theme	Sub-themes
RQ1 How do African American women describe their leadership characteristics as urban K-12 administrators as they transition to careers in the professoriate?	(a) visionary (b) hard working (c) impactful (d) confident and (e) resilient	
RQ2 How do African American women describe their experiences related to their transition from administrative careers in K-12 settings into the professoriate?	(a) personal experiences (b) professional experiences	<u>Personal Experiences</u> (a) supportive personal relationships (b) making sacrifices <u>Professional Experiences</u> (a) landing the job (b) mentors (c) dealing with doubters
RQ3 How do African American women describe their experiences as it relates to their new roles in the professoriate?	(a) new roles; new responsibilities (b) The isms rear their ugly heads (c) I'm a Superwoman and (d) Feeling the weight of the world on our shoulders.	